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HAWKSTONE.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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HAWKSTONE :

A TALE OF AND FOR ENGLAND

IN 184—.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON :

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1845.

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TO

LORD JOHN MANNERS,

AND OTHERS,

9/18/57

THE PROMISE AND FORERUNNERS OF A NEW
AND BETTER GENERATION,

The following Pages are Inscribed

BY A HAND UNKNOWN TO THEM,

WITH THE RESPECT

DUE TO EARNESTNESS OF MIND, AND LOFTINESS OF PURPOSE ;

AND WITH THE PRAYER,

THAT AS THEY ALREADY CHERISH

FAR HIGHER ASPIRATIONS THAN THE WORLD AROUND THEM,

SO THEY MAY SOON ACQUIRE

SUCH CLEAR AND DEFINITE VIEWS OF PRACTICAL DUTY,

AS MAY RENDER THEM

AN EXAMPLE AND A BLESSING TO

DISTRACTED AND DEGRADED

ENGLAND.

1-1 1/2 pages
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PREFACE.

“NEITHER was this in use only with the Hebrews, but it is generally to be found in the wisdom of the more ancient times—that as men found out any observation that they thought was good for life, they would gather and express it in parable, or aphorism, or fable. But for fables, they were vicegerents and supplies, where examples failed: now that the times abound with history, the aim is better when the mark is alive. And therefore the form of writing, which of all others is the fittest for this variable argument of negotiation and occasions, is that which Machiavel chose wisely and aptly for government, namely, discourse upon histories or examples; for knowledge drawn freshly, and, in our view, out of particulars, knoweth the way best to particulars again; and it hath much greater life for practice when the discourse attendeth upon the example than when the example attendeth upon the discourse: for this is no point of order, as it seemeth at first, but of substance;

for when the example is the ground, being set down in a history at large, it is set down with all circumstances which may sometimes control the discourse thereupon made, and sometimes supply it as a very pattern for action; whereas the examples alleged for the discourse's sake are cited succinctly and without particularity, and carry a servile aspect towards the discourse which they are brought in to make good.

“But this difference is not amiss to be remembered, that as history of times is the best ground for discourse of government, such as Machiavel handleth, so history of lives is the most proper for discourse of business, because it is more consonant with private actions.”—BACON'S *Advancement of Learning*.

December 23, 1844.

HAWKSTONE.

CHAPTER I.

It was a dark stormy night, and the wind was sweeping in gusts down the deserted streets of the town of Hawkstone, when Mr. Bentley, the young curate, was startled as he was sinking into his first sleep by a strange distant sound, mingling confusedly in the pauses of the wind, and growing louder and louder. He rose up on his elbow, and, after listening for a few moments, sprung from his bed, threw open the window, and through the trampling of feet, and the hoarse, broken clamour of a crowd, he caught distinctly the cry of fire. In a few moments, a man, breathless and half dressed, ran down the street, knocking and ringing at the doors. Windows were thrown open, and anxious terrified faces were thrust out, calling for information to the watchmen who were hurrying by. The fire-bell rang. The hollow iron rattle of the engine was heard, as it galloped past amidst the cracking of whips and the cries of the men and boys who had seated themselves about it; and on going to another part of the house Bentley saw at once a red, lurid glare, which showed him where the calamity had occurred.

Bentley was neither a cool nor a courageous man ;

but he was a man of warm sensibility, and the curate of the parish; and he lost no time in flinging on his clothes and hastening to the spot. As he was running down the steps of his house, Mrs. Alsop, the old woman who managed his little household, cried after him to give him his hat, and inquire if she should make up the blue bed, in case it should be wanted by any of the sufferers. "Yes, yes," was the reply, and "get mine ready too. Any thing you can think of for them poor souls." And the next minute he was out of sight.

A fireman who was running for more help told him, as he passed, that the fire was in Barton Row; and Bentley soon made his way to the spot, through a labyrinth of dark courts, and filthy alleys, which few persons knew of in Hawkstone, but himself, and the miserable beings whom he visited there. As he turned into one of these narrow passages, a strong red light at the end fell on a crowd of terrified faces, who were gazing on the scene of destruction; and the cries of "More water!" "More hose!" "Move the ladders!" "Pump away!" mingled with oaths, and screams, and the roaring of the flames, and the howling of the wind, struck a cold chill upon him, and almost broke his resolution to go nearer; for Bentley, as we said before, was a man of feeling, rather than a man of courage. But as he stopped, and leaned for a moment against the wall, a wild piercing shriek was heard; the flames shot up suddenly above the roofs, and as a cry of terror and anguish burst from the crowd, Bentley found himself, he scarcely knew how, standing in sight of the burning building. And the sight was sickening. The house which was on fire itself was one of a dingy red brick row, such as grow up in the suburbs of manufacturing towns, and, having been originally intended for decent occupants, become, by degrees,

the abode of numerous poor families, who each tenant a single room, and hide, under an exterior of some pretension, a degree of poverty, misery, and vice, greater, perhaps, than exists in huts and hovels. The fire had begun in the ground room, and had been discovered in time to permit the escape of a crowd of wretched, haggard men and women, bearing naked children in their arms, and endeavouring to save as treasures the little bedding, the clothes, stools, kettles, and rugs, which formed all their property in the world. All were supposed to have escaped; and they had gathered in little groups at a distance from the fire, the children cowering round their parents, and the parents endeavouring to wrap them from the cold, and to place them as guards over the little property they had saved; while, as the flames made their way from room to room, they looked on with a face almost of desperate unconcern, as if, for beings so destitute and wretched, it mattered little what fate awaited them, the fire or the famine.

The first floor had already fallen in; the lower part of the staircase was destroyed, and the firemen, hopeless of saving the house, were beginning to play on the adjoining buildings, when, to the horror of the crowd, a boy, about 14 years old, was seen shrieking for help at one of the garret windows. At the same moment a man and woman half clad rushed to the house, and, but for the interposition of the firemen, would have thrown themselves into the flames. "My child! my child! save my child! O God! save my child! save him! save him! O God! O God!" were the sounds that reached Bentley's ear just as he gained the spot. The man, a strong muscular swarthy ruffian, struggled with the desperation of a maniac to escape from the policeman, who held him back from rushing into certain destruction. The

woman, held back likewise, fell down upon her knees before Bentley, saying, "Save him! save him! let me go! I have a right to go! he is my child! save him! save him! my child! my child!" till Bentley, in an agony of distress, burst from her, and she sunk down in a fit. "Ten guineas! twenty guineas! a hundred guineas!" he cried (his whole stipend was scarcely more), any thing, only save the boy." No one answered.

"Is it impossible?"

"Yes, sir," said the man, with a dead hollow voice, who was working at the engine, "it is impossible; no one could get up the ladder through the flames. It is quite out of the question; God help it!"

And the poor man, who had children of his own, fairly burst into tears.

"Try—make an effort," returned Bentley.

"Can't be," said the man; "we must submit to God's will; God have mercy on it! Look at the ladder, sir; look there!"

And Bentley saw a burst of fire from the windows wrap it round and round like a whirlwind, just as the father, who, by one gigantic effort, had cast off his detainers, had mounted a few yards from the ground, and fell back as if blasted.

"Take the ladder away! take it away," cried the firemen. "It's no use: the next house has caught. More water! more water!"

And with that sturdy sense of command which Englishmen even in the lowest post of authority exercise over their feelings when engaged in official duties, he was proceeding to push aside Bentley, who was even thinking of making the attempt himself, and to remove the ladder, when a stranger made his way through the crowd. He was a man tall, vigorously formed, and with all those marks of high birth and commanding mind which the lower orders so instinctively recognise and obey.

There was a quietness and steadiness in his movements which contrasted strongly with the tumult about him ; and even Bentley, a man of education and religion, felt himself in the presence of a superior, and was unconsciously abashed at his own agitated state of feeling.

“Let the ladder stay, my good fellow,” said the stranger gently ; “let it stay. I have a protection here against the flames ; hold it fast at the bottom, and let me mount.” And the words were uttered in a tone of command which threw the firemen back. He stopped to put on a pair of thick gloves and a mask of wire over his face ; knelt down for a moment as in prayer, folded his hands over his cheeks, and those who stood near asserted that he made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and then sprung up the ladder before the by-standers had recovered themselves to interfere. He had seized the moment, when a fall of one of the inner walls had lulled the flames, which were bursting round him ; and the crowd, who were looking on with intense anxiety, hailed him with a loud cheer as he reached the window. The boy had already disappeared, having sunk down stupified with the smoke, and with terror. The window was closed and fastened within ; but the glass was broken, and the stranger, with all his strength, tore away sufficient of the woodwork to obtain an entrance. As he disappeared within the room, another volley of flame and smoke broke forth from the floor beneath, and cries of “Make haste ! make haste ! the floor is falling ! for God’s sake, make haste ! save yourself !” burst from the people, followed by a tremendous cheer as he appeared on the sill of the window with the boy wrapt up in a blanket. Another moment, and it had been too late. A frightful crush behind him announced the falling of the floor. A heavy chimney at the

side staggered, bowed, and fell upon the ruins; and before the flames could shoot out again, the stranger and his burden had slid down the ladder. Scorched and nearly stifled as he was, his first act on reaching the ground was once more to kneel down, and bury his face in his hands in silent prayer. Then giving the boy to Bentley, whose enthusiasm of admiration now was only equal to his agony of anxiety before, he quietly fell back into the crowd; and as they pressed about him with cries of "God bless him! There's a fine man! Bless your honour!" cheering him and thrusting their hands into his, and waving their hats, he simply answered, "Thank ye, thank ye! Will you allow me to pass?" And turning down the same alley through which Bentley had come upon the spot, he was lost to sight.

"Do you know who the gentleman is?" asked Bentley, of many of the by-standers who had gathered round the poor man and woman, as they sat with the boy in their arms, and watched him gradually returning to life.

"No, sir," was the general answer. "We never saw him before. He is a stranger in the town."

"But he's a real gentleman," said a poor labourer to another. "Yes, that he is," cried they all, "a real gentleman, and that's a fine thing to say. God bless him! say I." "God bless him!" cried another. "God bless him!" murmured the poor mother, as the boy's eyes began to open. Even the ruffian father relaxed his surly, gloomy look, and, though he did not say "God bless him," he muttered something about thanks, and, bidding his wife look to the things, took up the boy in his arms, and followed a poor neighbour, who had offered a part of her hovel as their refuge for the remainder of the night.

CHAP. II.

ON the Monday afternoon, in the week after the fire, a sensation (to use the fashionable term) was caused in the principal street of Hawkstone, by symptoms of an approaching festivity in the apartments of Miss Mabel Brook, who occupied the first-floor bow window in the very respectable house of Messrs. Silkem the linen-drapers. Mrs. Crump, the lame old lady who occupied a similar bow window on the opposite side of the way, and who, having a strong desire to know what was passing in the world, could yet command only that portion of the world which came within the focus of the above-mentioned window, had observed, as she informed her maid, that the little girl from the Grey school who waited on Miss Brook had gone out no less than three times that morning, and returned on each occasion with a something (Mrs. Crump could not tell what), but she had her suspicions. On the first sally, Mrs. Crump had traced her as far as her eye could stretch to the end of the street, when she turned a corner abruptly; but in a few minutes she came back again, and Mrs. Crump's ingenuity immediately called to mind that there was a pastry-cook's shop just at the distance required to account for this temporary disappearance. On the second occasion, there had been an open visit to Mallam's the grocer before Mrs. Crump's own eyes; and a return with a packet of tea, whether it was green or souchong, Mrs. Crump had been unable to ascertain. But as she knew Miss Brook three days before had sent

for a pound of tea to the same shop, Mrs. Crump inferred that it could not yet be exhausted, and that the new importation was probably green tea for company. The third expedition, at about four o'clock P. M. baffled Mrs. Crump completely. The little grey-clad abigail vanished at the end of the street, and when she returned she was accompanied by two other abigails clad in the same uniform, and bearing prodigious packages of some mysterious article wrapt up in white linen. In vain the old lady rubbed her spectacles, wiped the window, moved from one pane to the other; the contents of these portentous packages were impervious to her eyes. The Grey girls and the packages both disappeared at the side door of Messrs. Silkem's premises; the door closed upon them, and, in a fit of desperation, Mrs. Crump returned to her elbow-chair, pulled the bell rope, which was tied to it, and desired her maid immediately to go over, with her love to Miss Brook, and inquire how she did this evening.

"You can find out," she said, "from her servant, by the by, whether Miss Brook has company to tea."

No distressed lady in Mrs. Crump's predicament was ever blessed with an Iris more anxious to fulfil a task, which involved an occasional gossip, than Mrs. Crump's Martha, and, after a little delay, which provoked no little irritation in her impatient mistress, she returned with the announcement that Miss Brook had company to tea, and that she was expecting no less than ten ladies.

"Ten!" interrupted Mrs. Crump; "why, where is she to put them?"

Martha, who was out of breath, proceeded. "It was the great monthly meeting of the Hawkstone Dorcas or Benevolent Lying-in Union Society, of which Miss Mabel was the honoured secretary, and

most active supporter ; and there was to be Mrs. Thompson, and the Miss Macdougalls, and Mrs. and young Miss Maddox ; and muffins, and tea-cake, and wine and water afterwards. And the sofa had been uncovered, and the window curtains put up. And Mr. Peachit, the gardener, had sent some flowers for the chimney-piece, and Miss Brook was so busy, with her table covered with flannel, and nightcaps, and gingham, and all sorts of things ; — and the company were expected almost directly.” To all this, to the great disappointment of Martha, Mrs. Crump only answered “pish,” and the “pish” was repeated at the close ; accompanied, however, it must be confessed, with a rubbing of the spectacles and an advancement of the wheeled chair to the window, for the purpose, it may be presumed, of obtaining ocular demonstration of the arrival of the visitors. But the “pish” implied much. It implied, first, that Mrs. Crump was not a member of the Dorcas or Benevolent Lying-in Union Society ; secondly, that she was no friend to it ; thirdly, that she was, as she delighted to say, one of the old school. She did not think that any good ever came from such societies. She did not like mixing with Dissenters ; the Miss Macdougalls were Presbyterians, and the Maddoxes Unitarians ; she liked the good old way, and kept to the church, as her father and mother had done before her ; and if dozing regularly every morning over the psalms and lessons, attending regularly in her pew at church every Sunday, and even on Wednesdays, and Fridays, and Saints’ days, and giving her annual mite to the National Schools, and, we may add, playing her nightly rubber with Dr. Grant, the old paralytic rector, constituted a friend to the Church, no one could be relied on for more determined support than Mrs. Crump. And yet on the “pish” there followed

something like a sigh ; and as the old lady sat watching for the first arrival, she fell into a soliloquy on the evils of a solitary old age, when there were no children to repay the care of their youth, and society treated her as a burthen, and weak health and advancing infirmities prevented her from engaging in any active occupation either of business or amusement. There was, indeed, to relieve the heavy days which dragged on without change and without hope, an occasional morning call (few they were, and far between), from Miss Mabel Brook, and the other dowagers of the town. And at times, one or two of the younger ladies charitably reminded each other that they ought to call on poor Mrs. Crump. And once or twice in the month, Martha, who knew how her mistress required some relief to her monotonous existence, would entrap a stray nursery maid with Mrs. Thompson's little girls, or Mrs. Jones' baby ; and, as the old lady crawled to her cupboard for the slice of sweet cake, or made them sit down at her feet to show them the wonders of her worsted work, a tear would stand in her eyes at the thought of what had been denied to herself, — a child, a grandchild, any being whom she might look to for support, and love and watch over, and think on as a second self, instead of hanging upon a cold neglectful world, without interest, and without affection, until the grave closed over her head. And another thought sometimes struck her, little as her mind was formed to deeper reflection, that God could not have intended such things to be ; that if he were, as she devoutly believed, a god of love, and Christianity were designed by him to be a blessing to all mankind, there might be somewhere in its system, when rightly brought out, a provision for destitution like hers, and that something might be deficient in a church, which left her the widow, the labouring

with sickness, the desolate, the all but oppressed — whom it prayed for, as one of its especial objects of care, — with no consolation but a Bible, as little understood as it was monotonously perused; and no fixed task of duty but her worsted work, and the feeding of her cat; no one bound to attend on her but the hired Martha; and, saving one day in seven, no aid or comfort to her devotion, but once or twice a hurried service in a cold and desolate church, with no one, perhaps, but the children in the grey-school gallery, and poor Betty Foyle the blind old woman from the almshouse, to join in offering praises and thanksgiving, for a population of thousands.

Whether or not the old lady's soliloquy would have terminated thus, we cannot presume to say; for it was interrupted by the first arrival at Miss Mabel Brook's *soirée*, in the person of the two Miss Morgans, the pretty daughters of the principal surgeon in the town of Hawkstone.

And here we must apologise once for all for our inability to amuse our readers, and especially that privileged class who dwell in parks and villas, places, halls, and courts, at a distance from the vulgar town, for our inability to supply them with the usual facetious catalogue of odd characters, and still odder names with which modern art has loaded the population of our country towns. Hawkstone, indeed, like all other places of human resort, had its characters; and those characters had names. But we lament, for the sake of our readers, that they were little remarkable in any way. If they could not boast of Fitz's, and Ville's, and Saints, and De's, neither were they afflicted with the unseemly appellatives of Hobbs and Dobbs, Simkins or Scroggins. They were, in fact, fair, ordinary specimens of the middle class of English people; neither very clever

nor very stupid, very vulgar nor very polished, very enlarged in their notions nor very narrow. In one point they resembled all English people alike. They acknowledged an implicit submission for the little world in which they moved; anxiously aspiring to the notice of its leaders, and condescendingly patronizing all who came beneath themselves; and measuring the whole fate and character of the vast terra incognita beyond them, by the opinions, acts, and vicissitudes of their own little *coterie*. Perhaps, indeed, the Dorcas Society could not pretend to include exactly the élite of Hawkstone; for there were several little suburban villas in the neighbourhood, which being uncontaminated by pavement and gas lamps, aspired to a claim to rurality, and held somewhat aloof from the decidedly town population. But still it was composed of "respectables," in that sense of the word, which perhaps might be properly rendered "without a shop." Besides the Miss Morgans, the surgeon's daughters, there was Mrs. Lomax, the banker's wife, who officiated as president; the Miss Macdougalls, who tenanted the large brick house with five windows in front, and a coach-house and garden, at the north entrance of the town; Mrs. and Miss James, who had recently retired from the superintendence of a very respectable seminary for young ladies; Mrs. Hancock, the wife of Capt. Hancock, an officer on half pay, who continued to vegetate in a neat little verandaed cottage in the outskirts of the town; and the Maddoxes, whom their father's success in trade had placed in easy circumstances, and left them abundance, both of time and money, to devote to the charities of Hawkstone. And one after another they arrived at Miss Mabel's door; and though Mrs. Crump, who was by no means a favourable critic, did detect about them all a little bustle of serious

importance, more than the occasion required ; and Miss James had put into her cap rather a gayer display of flowers than suited the sobriety of her age ; and the Miss Macdougalls looked somewhat prim ; and Mrs. Lomax was guilty of a little ostentation in making her footboy follow her with a work-basket and cloak ; still there was little to censure in their appearance, and nothing to ridicule. And any one who could have seen the hearty welcome with which Miss Mabel received them, and the kind mutual greetings of the party, and the cheerfulness with which they produced work-boxes and baskets, scissors and needles, and ranged them on the green cloth of Miss Mabel's largest table, would think it a very ill-placed satire which attempted to caricature such a charitable meeting, assembled, as modern philanthropy delights to express it, without distinction of sect or party, to promote the comfort and relieve the wants of their fellow-creatures.

Of the whole party no one was so pleased as Miss Mabel herself. It was the first time that she had been enabled, by a removal into a new lodging, to entertain the Dorcas Society in her single room. And earnest were her pains to make her guests comfortable and happy ; and visible the satisfaction, notwithstanding all her pains to suppress it, with which she received the congratulations of the Miss Morgans on her cheerful view of the High Street, so close to the Crown Inn, where she might see every day no less than three coaches stop and change horses ; and Mrs. Lomax's panegyric on the prettiness of her sofa coverings ; and Miss James's admiration of the silver tea-pot, the only relic saved from the wreck of her father's little property ; and the praise which all bestowed on the delicious tea-cakes, and excellent cream. Every one seemed anxious to say some-

thing which would please and flatter her; for Miss Mabel was a general favourite.

She was the only daughter of an officer in the navy who had died at an advanced age, leaving Miss Mabel, neither young nor beautiful, with his blessing and a very small annuity, to make the remainder of her way through the troubles of the world by her own exertions. By dint of the strictest economy, she contrived soon to bring her wants and wishes within the compass of sixty pounds a year. High spirits and active habits engaged her in a variety of occupations which filled up her time, and absorbed both past and future, so far as anxiety or sorrow was concerned, in the interests of the present; and an inexhaustible fund of good humour and good nature made her invaluable to the little society of Hawkstone. It was Miss Mabel who undertook the management of the national schools; Miss Mabel who was secretary and chief mover, not only of the Dorcas Society, but of all the ladies' societies which flourished with a mushroom growth at Hawkstone; the Ladies' Branch Bible Society, the Ladies' Anti-Cruelty-to-Animals Society, the Ladies' Book Society, the Ladies' Association for the Conversion of the Jews, the Ladies' District-Visiting Society, the Ladies' Penitentiary, the Ladies' Female Orphan, and Deaf and Dumb, and Pastoral Aid, and General-Religious-Purpose Society. None could flourish, and few had originated, without Miss Mabel; her whole soul was in doing good. And if there mixed with this ardour of sincere benevolence some little bustle and over-zeal, and no little ignorance as to the right mode of doing good, it was the fault not so much of Miss Mabel herself, as of the age in which she was born; and which her own warmth of feeling and delight at the excitement of charity in which she had involved herself, represented to her as a

model of wisdom, and a Paradise of newly discovered virtues. Nor was her benevolence confined to public life. How she contrived to do so much no one could understand; but scarcely a *respectable* family in Hawkstone was ignorant of the value of her services. If Mrs. Jones was ill, Miss Mabel would come and spend the day and take care of the children. If a death occurred in a family, Miss Mabel was the first looked to for assistance in those melancholy moments; if a wedding, Miss Mabel assisted in distributing the bride cake; if a children's dance, at Mrs. Lomax's, Miss Mabel was the first who arrived to help in putting the young ones in motion, and the last who remained to see the candles put out, when the wearied hostess had retired to bed, and Mr. Lomax had shaken both her hands with a hearty wish that every one could be so useful. And in all this, there was neither conceit nor pretension; simply the overflowing of a kindly-disposed heart, which could not rest without doing something, and happily was most pleased when that something contributed, as she hoped, to the comfort of her kind friends and neighbours.

And having arrived at this point, it is high time to relieve the apprehensions which our fair readers, who care nothing for a story not strewn thick with lords and ladies, Almack's and diamonds, will feel, when our talk seems likely to be of market towns, and Mrs. Crumps, Dorcas Societies, and flannels. They need be under no alarm lest Miss Mabel Brook, much as we have enlarged her merits, should be the intended heroine of our tale; or lest we should already have destined her to pair off, after trials and temptations, with either Mr. Bentley or the unknown stranger of the fire. Miss Mabel is by no means an unimportant personage; but she is not the most important.

And they will be rejoiced to learn at once that our heroine will be a real lady, such as a heroine should be. Not as if the middle walks of life were contemptible, and had no joys or sorrows, duties or virtues, to excite our sympathies and interest; but because, where goodness does exist accompanied with rank and birth, it exists in a higher and nobler form than in a humbler station. It is a grievous mistake to think that the highest ranks of society are the only objects worth attention, or to undervalue the middle classes. But it is an equal mistake to make society rest on the foundation of the middle classes, or to suppose that leading minds, minds fitted to command and rule, will be found, except by some extraordinary accident, in any but men, whom nature, from their birth, has placed on an eminence, and accustomed them to receive the homage of the world as their birthright, without either vanity to court, or affectation to disclaim it. To Miss Mabel, however, we must return. And cheerful as she seemed, laughing with one, and arranging flannel with another, and pressing another cup of tea upon a third, it might be remarked that her eye glanced often to the door, and then to an old easy chair, stationed in the warmest corner of the room, and provided with a cushion and a footstool, which no one yet had presumed to occupy. She was evidently anxious for another arrival.

"We shall see Mrs. Bevan, I hope, to-night," said Mrs. Lomax, with a tone of sincerity.

"I trust she is coming," subjoined Miss Macdougall, in a voice which implied no regret if she were to remain away.

"What can make her so late?" continued Mrs. Maddox, with something of censoriousness in her manner.

And even Mabel began to wonder at her absence,

not without some secret misgivings as to the desirableness of her presence. And yet, if there was one person in the world whom Mabel venerated, it was Mrs. Bevan ; who on the death of Captain Brook had offered her the shelter of Brookfield Parsonage ; had accustomed her to the active duties of charity, to which she had subsequently devoted herself, and had been to her almost a mother. She had seen this friend pass through trial after trial with a quiet fortitude, an undisturbed piety, and a sweetness of temper almost angelic. Two children had been taken from her in early life. Her husband, the Rector of Hurst, after a life of zealous devotion to his duty, had followed them to the grave ; and she herself was now established in Hawkstone, dividing her time between reading and charity, and in both continuing to follow the principles which her excellent husband had taught her in the management of his parish. On the dispersion of his little property at his death, she had contrived, at some sacrifice, to retain the greater part of his small but well selected library, composed chiefly, like most others belonging to parochial clergymen of a former generation, of the English divines of the seventeenth century. To these occasional additions were made by her son, who was resident at Oxford, as a fellow of——college. And Mrs. Bevan, having little taste for the trash of the circulating library, was content to read through and through her little store, and gradually became something of a sound divine, sufficient at least to excite the wonder of the Hawkstone ladies at her learning, and even, though with no intention on her own part, to perplex Dr. Grant, and still more Mr. Bentley, with an accidental reference or question. One thing we must do Mrs. Bevan the justice to add ; she was no writer. She had never thought herself competent to under-

take to direct the religious world by means of periodical papers. If she heard of erroneous opinions rising up in the Church, she did not write letters to the newspapers, warning her beloved countrymen against the encroaching heresy. She left this task in the hands where God had placed it—to his own ministers. Neither did she dare to frame prayers and meditations for others, however much she might think they were wanted. Still less did she relish the idea of unbosoming herself to the public, laying bare her movements, and feelings, and fancies, and sympathies in a memoir, or a tour, or an autobiography, or any other similar form, in which young ladies as well as young gentlemen now delight to come forward on the stage, uncalled for and unwished for, in the hope of obtaining some random applause. She had her notions of domestic economy, and very good notions they were; but political economy she left to Mr. Malthus. And she spent no little portion of her time in the school of Hawkstone, and had suggested many sensible improvements in the management of it; but if it had been proposed to her to enlighten the world on the subject of education, she would probably have smiled with surprise, that any one who professed to know what education was, should think of its being discussed by one who had never studied the deep principles of philosophy, on which it must be based, and without which it becomes mere quackery. In short, Mrs. Bevan, though in her own little circle of study she was a very well-read lady, was by no means a literary lady. And so much the better for herself and for those around her.

Her only compositions were her letters to her son at Oxford; and regularly once a week Charles Bevan, on his return from morning chapel, found to his great delight a little folio on his table, containing

the news of Hawkstone; how the school was flourishing, how the church was attended, how opinions were improving. And when the vacation arrived, and they were once more seated together in the evening—Charles, with his folio, and his paper and pencil, and his mother making his tea, or engaged in the mysteries of her work-box—she was able to enter with him into the subject nearest his thoughts, and to talk of his dear Oxford, and the struggle which was then commencing there against the follies of the day, and to follow him in his plans and conjectures, and his observations on the works which it was sending forth. If, indeed, at first, she was startled by the earnestness and depth of his views, her alarms were soon quieted by observing that they were quiet, diffident, and discriminating. Many of them, new to him, were old to herself. She could recollect the time when, every morning and evening, there was a regular service in Hawkstone church; when, on saints' days, a sermon had been preached, in compliance with an old benefaction—when the very name of a dissenter would have been sufficient to set the populace in commotion—when the grammar school, now sunk into neglect, had educated the sons of all the tradesmen and farmers around, and every day the boys might have been seen following the master to church, to take part in the regular service. She had known Hawkstone in its simple unsophisticated state, before Lord Claremont had been obliged to leave his estate at nurse in the hands of trustees, and retire himself to the Continent—and General Villiers had deserted the Priory—and Mr. Smith had discovered the capacities of Hawkstone stream, and raised on its banks the enormous hundred-windowed factory, with its steam-engines, and spinning-jennies, and smoking chimney, and haggard mob of occupants,

which now shocked the eye of the traveller, on his quitting the park paling and woods of the Priory, and entering the metamorphosed town. And she could sigh with Charles over the change which had taken place—on the empty church—the crowded meeting-houses—the squalid, vitiated, turbulent population—the distracted political parties—the absence of any man of birth, and property, and sound principles, to keep the town in order, and devise means for bringing it once more into “unity of spirit, into the bond of peace, and into righteousness of life.” With these feelings, Mrs. Bevan could easily sympathise with her son, when he spoke of reviving again the right moral influence of the Church; of giving it new strength and additional arms to grasp and bring back to its bosom the thousands whom it had permitted to wander—when he talked with enthusiasm of the men by whom the thought and hope of such a consummation had been roused—when he described the purity of their lives, the depth of their learning, the quiet, unobtrusive way in which they practised what they taught, and then, almost with tears in his eyes, blessed God, who even in this wilful age had kept from destruction those noble institutions in which the spirit that animated them had been preserved alive, burning under a heap of ruins.

“And so, then,” some of our readers will exclaim, “Mrs. Bevan was a Puseyite.” Mrs. Bevan was a lady—a lady by birth, education, habits of society, and refinement of mind. And no one could practise better that quiet, dignified, but severe, castigation, which such ladies are able to bestow on impertinence and flippancy. And the young person (for old persons do not indulge in such vulgarities) who had once presumed to apply to her, within hearing, such a silly and mischievous nickname, would undoubt-

edly never have ventured to repeat it a second time. "But she had studied the 'Tracts for the Times,' then?" We rather believe not. Some portions her son had read out to her; and she admired the eloquence of some, hesitated as to expressions in others, perhaps did not quite like the tone of speaking here and there. But with the principles, which her late husband had inculcated and practised, and the habitual perusal of the great standard works of the English Church, Mrs. Bevan found little novelty in the "Tracts for the Times," and other works of the same authors, and preferred, as the Tracts themselves recommended, her own course of old divinity, to any modern teaching, on one side or the other. And she gladly agreed with Charles, (who, at one time, she feared, might be led away by his personal respect for the leaders in the new movement,) when he congratulated her that sound doctrines were now reviving independently in several parts of the Church, and less necessity would exist for the guidance of individual men.

All this time we are detaining our readers (we would fain hope they are impatient readers) from Miss Brook and the Dorcas Society. And we must return in time to find Miss Brook, with some disappointment in her countenance, perusing a little twisted note which has just arrived to announce that Mrs. Bevan was unable to attend.

"Is Mrs. Bevan unwell?" said Miss Macdougall, with rather an offended look.

"She has no engagement, I know," said the younger Miss Maddox, in a tone bordering on reproach.

"We must do as well as we can without her," subjoined Mrs. Maddox, with a sigh in which she intended to convey more of sorrow than of anger.

“Does Mrs. Bevan mention any reason?” asked Mrs Lomax, pacifically.

Miss Mabel looked again at the note, but no reason appeared, only there was a postscript hoping to see Miss Mabel to-morrow. The whole party sympathetically said, “Well!” and then proceeded to commence the business of the evening.

This has been a longer chapter than we anticipated. And as we know that, with most of our readers, reading is an uphill work, and their own powers of attention not a little asthmatic,—that they are either lolling in an easy chair after eating a full dinner, or lying on a sofa in their club-room; or, if they are young ladies, that one is tired with reading us out, while the others are yawning over their work-boxes and worsted frames; for all these reasons we think it better to give them and ourselves a respite, and to postpone the business of the Dorcas Society till another chapter.

CHAP. III.

‘AND they proceeded to the business of the evening.’

This business was opened by Miss Mabel Brook, who brought before the society the case of Mrs. Connell. Mrs. Connell was one of the poor women who had been burnt out by the late fire, and whose boy had been saved from the flames. She was in great poverty. Her husband was a drunken, worthless profligate; she herself near her confinement. And Miss Jane Morgan, who had accidentally found her in great distress both of mind and body, had promised to apply for relief to the Society in her approaching illness. All voices were unanimous in her favour. And while the bag was making up, Miss Jane proceeded to describe her interview with the poor woman. She had given her some money, and added a ticket for the Dispensary, and recommended a plaster for the face of the boy who had been scorched in escaping from the fire. Nothing could be better. She had also spoken to her generally on the subject of religion, on the state of her husband, and the duty of prayer. And she had given her a Prayer-Book, with the service of the visitation of the sick, and promised to mention her state to Mr. Bentley the curate. But at these words, Miss Brook was alarmed to see the colour rising in Mrs. Maddox's face.

“I must really beg your pardon, Miss Jane,” exclaimed the matronly lady, “but you must know that doing any thing of the kind is contrary to the fifth rule

of the Society, which expressly says, that we are not to attempt making proselytes."

"Proselytes!" replied Miss Jane, slightly confused, "I really never thought of such a thing; she told me she had been baptized in our Church."

"Indeed!" rejoined Mrs. Maddox: "it happens that poor Mrs. Connell has nothing to do with your Church. She used at one time to wash for me; and ever since that, I know that she has attended our chapel; for every Sunday that she goes to chapel, I told her, you know," addressing her daughters, "that she was to have her dinner with our servants."

"Oh, yes," cried the young ladies, "I assure you she belongs to us." And poor Miss Jane was obliged to apologise for having given the Prayer-Book, and mentioned Mr. Bentley, to the poor sufferer.

"Religion, indeed," subjoined Mrs. Maddox, in a forgiving and placable tone, "we must all inculcate in our visits. But peculiar doctrines," she added with a bland smile, "you know, my dear Miss Jane, we have agreed, shall never disturb our charitable purposes." Miss Jane, who knew nothing of religion but what she had learned from her Prayer-Book and Catechism, and the Bible as explained from the pulpit of Hawkstone church, made at once a resolution to set aside those prejudiced associations, and to form a religion for herself, without any peculiar doctrines, and which she might speak of to the poor and afflicted without incurring Mrs. Maddox's censures.

"I will go myself," said Mrs. Maddox, "and see the poor woman, and will not trouble you, my dear Miss Jane, as she is one of us. And I have no doubt the Society will be glad to give her some relief from the money which Mr. Bentley has placed at our disposal. I will take it to her to-morrow." And

though some slight misgiving came across Miss Mabel at the appropriation of Mr. Bentley's donation from the Offertory money, to the evident purpose of keeping Mrs. Connell to the Unitarian chapel, all had before their eyes the fear of being suspected of a desire to make proselytes, and the grant was proposed and carried.

The next motion related to Betsy Trotter, and Miss Mabel evidently laboured under some embarrassment in alluding to it. Betsy Trotter, like Mrs. Connell, was a poor woman; five children; husband earning eight shillings a week; an honest man,—every thing to recommend the case. But the application for assistance had been made to Miss Mabel, as secretary; and she begged to transfer the task of conveying the Society's grant to the applicant to the hand of Miss Macdougall.

"I suppose," said that lady to Miss Mabel, "you feel some little difficulty about Jenny?"

And Miss Mabel owned the impeachment. It appeared that Jenny Trotter had belonged to the Grey School, one of those old-fashioned charities, which the benevolent but illiberal founders saddled with the express condition of their being extended only to children in communion with the Church. Now John Trotter the father worked regularly in Miss Macdougall's garden. And Miss Macdougall, with a laudable zeal for the spiritual welfare of all her dependants, had recommended him one Wednesday evening to go and hear Mr. Bryant at the Presbyterian chapel. She had also, with the same laudable zeal, lent him a number of tracts, in which, perhaps without the lender's knowledge, the Church of England, (in which, by-the-by, poor John had been baptized,) was spoken of in no very respectful terms; its bishops were called tyrants and oppressors—why and wherefore John did not know; but never

having seen a bishop himself, he could not contradict the statement. Then the Liturgy was mere popery ; and John, who knew the history of Guy Faux by heart, was naturally alarmed at having so long been an accomplice with that wicked papist. The surplice also, which he had seen Dr. Grant and Mr. Bentley wear every Sunday, was called a filthy rag. And though the word seemed rather strong, John could not help acknowledging that very often it was not so clean as it should be. And having no other place to go to on a Wednesday evening after he had finished his work, and being naturally of a religious frame of mind, John went again and again to the chapel. And again and again he heard Mr. Bryant say pretty much the same as Miss Macdougall's tracts. And a good deal of what he used to be told by Mr. Bentley, about faith and love, and going by the Bible only, and the worthlessness of forms and the sufficiency of prayer to obtain the aid of God,—all this he heard from Mr. Bryant ; only Mr. Bryant said a great deal more on points on which Mr. Bentley had never uttered a word, and on which therefore poor John was wholly at a loss,—such as the duty of obedience to the Church, the authority of bishops, the necessity of the Sacraments, and the like. And unhappily all that Mr. Bryant said made John look on these points as absurd and even wicked. Then one day while he was digging a border, Mr. Bryant, who had been paying a congregational visit to Miss Macdougall, came by accident into the garden, and after asking for his wife and children, told him he was glad to see him so often at church, and slipped half-a-crown into his hand to buy him a Bible. And another time he called in at John's cottage to inquire how he did ; and after talking with a sad and grieved countenance of the spiritual destitution of Hawkstone,—

only Mr. Bentley to do all the duty, and Dr. Grant rolling in wealth, and paying him only 90*l.* a year. — Mr. Bryant shook his head in a melancholy way, and took his leave with a soliloquy, which John was evidently intended to overhear: “Alas! poor Church of England! it ruins more souls than it saves!” In short, we need not follow up the steps by which John shifted his place on Sunday from the cold wet pavement and narrow bench in the aisle under the pulpit of Hawkstone church, and where his face had been seen for years, to a warm comfortable seat, provided for him by Mr. Bryant himself, in the Presbyterian chapel. And once there, he was soon taught to feel as much aversion for the church as he had before felt love. And conscientious and honest as he was, he was resolved not merely to save his own soul by quitting an evil church, governed by those enemies to the Gospel, bishops and archbishops, but to save his children also. Jenny, therefore, was ordered to attend him on Sundays to Mr. Bryant’s meeting. In vain Miss Mabel, to whom was confided the chief superintendence of the Grey School, condemned Jenny for her first absence from church, and even threatened to punish her. It was her father’s order; and Miss Mabel felt it impossible to inculcate disobedience to parents. In vain, when the offence was repeated, Miss Mabel paid a visit to John’s cottage, to remonstrate on the secession; John was inexorable. And as Mr. Bryant had taken care to provide his inquiring mind with texts from Scripture respecting preaching the Gospel, and sundry difficulties about the use of the word bishop in the epistles, besides the unanswerable question whether St. Paul had 50,000*l.* a year, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, Miss Mabel, who knew little more of a bishop than that he wore a wig, and sat in parliament, and was

called my lord, and travelled about the country on rare occasions of confirmation, was compelled to beat a retreat for fear of being discomfited in argument. One more attempt she made, and then John, encouraged by success, launched out in such violent invectives on the Church, and every one that belonged to it, and especially on young Mr. Bentley, whom she had taken under her especial patronage, that, unable to suppress her indignation, she pronounced on him a formal anathema; and at an extraordinary meeting of the Grey committee, Jenny was dismissed from the school.

It was this which caused her present difficulty. "How can I," as she justly remarked, "do kindnesses to persons whom I believe to be doing wrong, who are attacking and abusing what I most value, without leading them to suppose that I do not think them in the wrong, or do not reverence what they abuse? I can repay with kindness a personal injury; this is only the duty of a Christian: but the Trotters I believe to be in commission of a sin. And I cannot show them any mark of favour without compromising my own conscience, and misleading theirs. I do not find fault with them, remember, for leaving the Church—that is a question between them and their Maker; and every one should act according to his conscience: but I do blame them highly for abusing the Church, Mr. Bentley, and myself, and the ladies of the school, after their daughter had been in it so long, and Mr. Bentley had been so kind to them." And Miss Mabel, having stated the difficulty, was silent. To this difficulty, Miss Macdougall, though she did not exactly see the sin of abusing the Church, willingly assented, and undertook to act as almoner of the society in place of Miss Mabel; for the society, in its corporate capacity, being precluded from entertain-

ing any peculiar attachment to the Church, was quite insensible to the crime of abusing it; and, indeed, being raised wholly above any distinctions of right or wrong in religious matters, looked only on John's small wages and his wife's large family; and the question was easily decided,—so easily, indeed, that several of the young ladies could not help remarking to themselves how troublesome it was to have a conscience; and how easily all these difficulties might have been removed if Alderman Brown had not insisted on the children of the Grey School going to church, or if Miss Mabel would allow every one to have their own opinion on religion. Mrs. Maddox, indeed, could not help saying that she hoped the new charity commissioners would do away with these persecuting restrictions of the Grey School; and that the children of all sects might partake together of the bounties of Alderman Brown, and of a sound religious education, without any peculiar doctrines to disturb their mutual affection.

“And now, my dear Mabel,” she continued, with a peculiar complacency of voice which indicated a consciousness of success, “what is to become of the bazaar? You are always at the bottom of these things, you know you are—so active—so liberal—such enlarged views.” And she turned to Miss Mabel, who, with a little confusion of conscious importance, protested that she was not in the secret—she had nothing to do with it. Only Mr. Bentley had been describing the sad destitution of the sufferers by the fire, and she had just mentioned it accidentally; and Lady Thompson at Rosewood Villa had thought it would be a good thing; and Mrs. Lomax had promised to hold a stall. Mrs. Lomax bowed a grave acquiescence.

“And whom else will you have?” said Mrs. Maddox, unconsciously glancing at her daughters.

"Why," said Miss Mabel, equally unconsciously betraying the secret that she had been engaged in active correspondence on the subject, "there is some hope that the Dowager Lady Sudborn will help us; and then Lady Thompson has promised to invite Miss O'Neill to stay with her, and keep her stall,—the beautiful Miss O'Neill, you know, who sold such a number of things at the Fairfield bazaar."

"Miss O'Neill!" cried a little voice from the bottom of the table; "what! the beautiful Miss O'Neill?"

And Miss Martha Beadon, who was a niece of Mrs. Lomax', and was then staying on a visit to her aunt, immediately entered into a low laughing communication with two other young ladies who were sitting next her. In vain Mrs. Lomax looked, and frowned, and nodded. Little Martha's high spirits carried her away; and even Miss Mabel, at the other end of the table, busied as she was in cutting out a baby's frock, and discussing its proper length with Mrs. Maddox, could overhear the words "Fairfield" — "Miss O'Neill" — "two officers" — "three guineas" — "pair of gloves" — "handsome girl," and other stray passages, which, when put together, seemed to imply some anecdote of the bazaar not quite conformable to the notions which Miss Mabel maintained of strict feminine delicacy. After a few sentences, Miss Martha's voice sunk into a whisper; and "oh! oh, fy! hush!" — and the gravity suddenly assumed by the young hearers confirmed her suspicions, and very nearly overturned all her plans for a Hawkstone bazaar, together with a design for a splendid kettle-holder, which she had intended to work herself, and devote to the purposes of the charity.

"Lady Thompson," she said in a hurry, in order to stop farther tittle-tattle at the bottom of the table, "was proposing a ball. She thought many persons

who would not give any thing to the poor persons, or buy at the bazaar, would willingly show their charity by coming to the ball."

The Miss Macdougalls both looked prim, and seemed suddenly immersed in the perplexity of some plaited calico before them.

"We should all like a ball," said Mrs. Lomax, looking to Martha, at the bottom of the table, and thinking that she should probably be asked to be one of the patronesses.

"Yes," said Miss Lomax, "and we might all make parties from the country." If you remember the last time we asked the Vincents and the St. Barbes, and the Grahams, and they stayed with us three days; and it was so agreeable; only I remember papa quarrelled at the expense of so many dinners. But then it was all for charity; and the St. Barbes would never have come if we had not asked them."

"How well," whispered Miss Maddox, "I remember that ball. You must know papa gave us all new dresses, white satin trimmed with blond; and only think, that awkward waiter at the Bell threw a cup of coffee over mine, and spoiled it for ever: mine alone cost six guineas."

"What a pity!" exclaimed the little knot of young ladies.

"And do you remember, too, how silly it was of Mary Vincent: she would not go at all; and the only reason was, that she had been to see the poor people in the morning, and could not get their distress out of her head. She said she really could not dance with any pleasure while thinking of them."

"How very odd!" exclaimed the young ladies at the bottom of the table.

And just at this time Miss Mabel, at the top, who had been searching for some papers in an account-book, read out the sums of money raised for the last

misfortune of a similar kind : — Sermon at church, 5*l.* 10*s.* 4½*d.* Private subscriptions, 26*l.* 7*s.* 10*d.* Balance of ball, deducting expenses, lights, music, rooms, and refreshments, 6*l.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

“My own notion,” she added, “was an oratorio in the church. It is so much more solemn; and sacred music is so delightful. Is it not, my dear Miss Macdougall?” But that lady again looked prim, and, muttering something indistinctly, was again perplexed with her calico.

“Oh, do let us have an oratorio!” cried Miss Martha. “I shall never forget going to one at Worcester Cathedral. It was the most beautiful thing I ever saw; all the famous opera-singers were there, and Signor Bellini, and Signora Strozzi. I remember I was so surprised; for the last time I heard them it was at the theatre, and I could not help expecting to see them come dressed in the same way, with helmets and plumes of feathers, and velvet cloaks, and shields and swords, and all that; but they were dressed just like common people. It was quite disappointing.”

“Do you remember, Anne,” said Mrs. Lomax to her youngest daughter, who was the musician of the family, “how admirably Strozzi sang those sweet things from *The Messiah*? She had the finest voice I ever heard. It was quite pathetic. Only” — and here Mrs. Lomax fell into a *sotto voce* remark to her next neighbour, of which nothing was audible but “sad character! — poor thing! — quite dissolute, I assure you.”

“And how well,” interposed Miss Anne, “they had arranged the seats! All the upper part of the choir was boarded over; and as we had some interest with the stewards, we had the most comfortable place you can conceive, just over the altar; I do believe I was exactly in the centre, just upon it. And we heard so well!” Just at this moment

something made Miss Macdougall look up from her work with a rather surprised air, and Mrs. Maddox and Miss Catherine exchanged little glances accompanied with the slightest curl of a smile on their lips.

"It would take a long time," said Miss Mabel, thoughtfully, "to fit up the church."

"Yes, I think they told us at Worcester they had been obliged to suspend the service for six weeks or more. And I shall never forget the clattering, and hammering, and the swearing of the workmen, while they were pulling down the scaffolding. It sounded quite strange in the cathedral."

"What we should want," said Miss Mabel, thoughtfully again, "would be stewards. It generally costs the stewards a tolerably round sum. At Worcester, I believe, they usually lose about 800*l.* between them."

"But then," said Mrs. Lomax, "they gain four or five hundred for the charity; and that, you know, is a great thing."

"If we have a bazaar," said Miss Mabel, thoughtfully as before, "we must work for it."

"Oh! we will all work," exclaimed a number of voices, in which the Misses Macdougall did not join.

"And it must not be any thing useful," added Miss Mabel, — "I mean any thing one really wants; for, you know, persons always buy such things best at the shops: and it would throw the poor workmen out of employment, if we set up a rival establishment."

"Oh no, certainly not," was the answer. And each began to consider in what she could best employ her time without producing any thing which should be really useful. One would paint a pair of screens; another could ornament a card-box with paste and paper, so as to make it look like real wood; another had learned the art of stuffing little

figures of birds, and covering them with real feathers; a fourth had already commenced the cover of an ottoman, which was to consume four or five guineas' worth of wool and silk, besides six weeks' uninterrupted labour, morning and evening, and which, when it was finished, with the border of yellow and crimson, and St. George and the Dragon, in deep blues and reds, in the centre, and the framework, and the tassels, no one thought would be dearly priced at five pounds.

Mrs. Lomax promised to give up the children to their governess for a week or two, and contribute a little model of a farmyard (a papyreum it was called), in which were to be cows and pigs, and a haystack, two ploughmen, and one milkmaid, besides barns and outhouses, all constructed by some ingenious process which she kept a profound secret, out of silver paper, and which, under a glass case, would look beautiful on a table in a drawing-room. And Miss Mabel once more reverted to her kettle-holder, and almost engaged, in addition, for a patch-work counterpane, provided all present would engage to furnish her with fragments from their wardrobes.

"And what progress has been made in the subscription," said Miss Catherine Macdougall, at length folding up her work, and looking as if she wished to go home.

"Tolerable," replied Miss Brook. "Mr. Lomax very liberally headed it with two pounds; and most of the tradespeople have given their five and ten shillings."

"I assure you," said Mrs. Lomax, in a melancholy tone, "these subscriptions are ruinous. Mr. Lomax declared to me, solemnly, that last year they had cost him no less than twenty guineas, besides what he gives in charity at the door. With his family, and situated as we are, obliged to keep so

much company, and with our establishment, I cannot bear to see him asked for any thing which is not absolutely necessary. But this is a case—no less than four families without a home. Is it not, my dear Miss Mabel?”

“Five!” said Miss Mabel. “The only odd thing that I have heard yet is the refusal of the stranger at the Bell—the gentleman, you know, who saved the child—our hero, as we call him.”

“He refuse!” cried the whole party.

“How very handsome he is!” whispered Miss Maddox. “Do not you think so?” And little Martha, to whom the question was addressed, coloured up as taken by surprise, and answered, “Yes—no—I cannot tell,” though ever since the night of the fire her whole fancy was running on the mysterious stranger, whom she had caught sight of in the street the next morning, and at once had set down as a prince, or at least a count, in disguise, who might possibly fall in love with herself and make her a countess.

“The fact is,” said Mrs. Maddox, significantly, “I know more about the circumstances than any one else. And I must say, they struck me as very strange—I might even say suspicious.” And she looked round for some mark of approbation of her great sagacity. “You know how well it was arranged that the subscription should be set on foot without any distinction of sects or parties.” This was uttered with another bland smile on the amiable Mabel. “So Mr. Maddox and Mr. Lomax took one part of the town, and Mr. Bentley and our excellent friend Mr. Bryant”—a smile at Miss Macdougall—“took the other. Well, when Mr. Maddox and Mr. Lomax called on the stranger at the Bell; they were shown up into his room—the best room in the house, I assure you, over the coffee-room. And the

waiter seemed so civil, and indeed to be quite afraid of him. And Mr. Maddox said that he observed several travelling-cases, and an imperial, and every thing, in fact, like a man of fortune. Nothing could be more polite. Evidently quite a man of the world. But on learning the object of the visit, he regretted that he could not do any thing, as he always gave his contributions through the hands of the clergyman of the parish."

"How odd!" cried the young ladies.

"Not very liberal, I must say," said Miss Catherine Macdougall.

"But," continued Mrs. Maddox, nearly out of breath, and afraid lest any one should seize the end of the story without her, "the strangest thing is to come. When Mr. Bentley and Mr. Bryant called in consequence, he was very civil to Mr. Bentley, and very cold and stiff indeed to poor Mr. Bryant; and after all, on some foolish excuse or another, he would not give them any thing.

"How extremely shabby!" was the exclamation, in which the voice of Miss Catherine, who could not help feeling for Mr. Bryant, was heard with peculiar sharpness.

"But this is not all," continued Mrs. Maddox, rising from the table and becoming agitated. "You know," she said, looking to Miss Catherine, who was leaning forward to catch any thing which might avenge the slight offered to her favourite preacher,— "you know this gentleman," (and there was a bitterness mingled in the expression this 'gentleman,') "though he did behave very well in saving the child, was seen by fifty persons crossing himself, actually crossing himself. He must be a Papist!" and her voice became louder, as she reached the climax.

"Certainly!" said Miss Catherine and Miss

Macdougall both, with a firm, decisive, judicial, condemnation of the unhappy criminal. "And you know Lord Claremont is erecting a Catholic" (if Mrs. Bevan had been here she would have insisted on its being called a Roman) "Catholic chapel. And parliament is just going to be dissolved. And now I think I need say no more: you can guess who this gentleman is, and what he is doing in Hawkstone; I have not a doubt he intends to be the new member."

Why Mrs. Maddox should leap so rapidly to her conclusion, and feel so much interest, and speak with such evident exasperation on the subject, was a problem to the Dorcas Society at large; and much pondering was proceeding in secret, when the diffident Sarah Morgan, from the bottom of the table, with a very faltering voice, which she had not trusted herself to utter during the whole evening, except to her nearest neighbour, and colouring at thus coming forward in public, ventured to say that she had heard something also which clearly proved that the incognito was a Papist. Mr. Morgan's housemaid was sister-in-law to the first cousin of Robert, the head waiter at the Bell; and thus Miss Morgan, whose curiosity, in common with all the other inhabitants of Hawkstone, had been wonderfully excited by the handsome stranger, was put in possession of many little facts, not known to the common world. It appeared that one morning Mary the chambermaid had found in arranging his bedroom a little gold cross with a hair chain attached to it, which he received from her without any confusion, and put round his neck. Moreover, on Friday last when Robert after breakfast brought him the bill of fare, Robert's observant eye detected that nothing had been touched but a crust of bread, and, to his still greater surprise, nothing was ordered

for dinner but a poached egg: this was evidently fasting. And to crown all, Mr. Bryant, when making his visit of charity, having been shown into the room before the stranger appeared, had turned over several books on the table, and two of them were Greek folios, which Mr. Bryant did not understand, and a third was mixed up with red letters, and the fourth Mr. Bryant had seen by the lettering was a breviary. What a breviary was, the ladies of the Dorcas Society did not exactly understand, but they had met with the word in several romances connected with monks and beads, nuns and crosses, and they could not doubt it was something bad.

We must not dwell on the ejaculations, partly of pity and partly of grave condemnation, with which these facts were received. The notion that a Papist should ever come forward as member for Hawkstone, on which notion Mrs. Maddox seemed strangely bent, was deemed an absurdity. "And after all, my dear Mrs. Maddox," said Miss Mabel, "we know nothing of the stranger, not even his name; he had no directions on his trunks." (How Miss Mabel had learned this fact was a mystery.) "He has received no letters, he has never given his name to the waiter; and there is something so commanding about him, that the people at the Bell are afraid to ask him. All I can hope," continued she, "is that Mr. Bentley may find some opportunity of speaking to him; and if any one can convert him, it must be Mr. Bentley. What a beautiful sermon he preached against popery last Sunday!—so very impressive!"

"Oh, it was beautiful! Did you not like it?" said little Martha, looking up in the face of Miss Catherine Macdougall, who had left her chair for some work, and was leaning over Martha's shoulder.

Mrs. Lomax coughed significantly.

"Was it not beautiful, Miss Macdougall?"

Two more coughs from Mrs. Lomax; but Martha heeded not. "I do hope," she continued, "you like Mr. Bentley? I never heard such a delightful preacher."

"Martha, my dear, lend me your scissors," cried Mrs. Lomax from the other end of the table; and as Martha took up the scissors she met a look and a frown which plainly told her she was making some mistake.

"We always go to our own church," replied Miss Catherine, very coldly.

"But I thought you lived in Hawkstone?" asked the innocent Martha, who, as a stranger, was not enlightened on the polemical statistics of the place.

"So we do," said Miss Catherine.

"But where do you go to church, then?" continued Martha, warned in vain by a friendly foot touching her under the table. "There is only one church in the town, is there?"

Here Jane Lomax took the opportunity of some little movement to whisper, "They are Presbyterians."

"Oh, she meant the chapel, then," whispered Martha.

"No, my dear," said Miss Catherine, colouring, who had no wish to avoid the discussion, "I meant the church. Our place of worship is a church as well as yours."

"But I thought," again asked Martha, "that there was only one Church? Does not the Bible say there is only one Church, aunt?" Mrs. Lomax had no wish to reply, and was busy with her work-basket.

"You know," continued Miss Catherine, "we are the Church in Scotland, and you are Dissenters; and we are Dissenters here, and you are the Church."

"But then there must be two Churches," said Martha; "and the Bible says there is but one. Is not that strange?"

"My love," said Mrs. Lomax, impatiently, "we should not talk of things which we do not understand. So put up your work, for it is getting quite late—half past nine, I declare." And Martha proceeded to arrange her work-basket, pondering in her mind how Miss Macdougall could call her chapel a church, when the Bible said there was but one Church, and resolved to ascertain as soon as possible what the meaning of a Church was, and whether, which she strongly doubted, it meant any thing at all.

Mrs. Lomax's move seemed gladly seconded by Mrs. Maddox, who had evinced for some time a little fidgetty impatience, implying that she wished the evening at a close. And the party had soon partaken of Miss Mabel's wine-and-water, adjusted their cloaks, put on their clogs, and galoshes, and Gloucester boots, and wishing each other a kind, good night, they made their way down Mabel's narrow staircase, into the gas-lighted street. Mrs. Maddox alone found a singular difficulty in fastening her cloak. And after allowing the others to depart, and telling her daughter that the servant might come again for her, she no sooner saw that all were gone, than closing the door, she seated herself once more by the fire, and announced that she had something to impart of consequence. Mabel took the opposite seat, and assumed the air of an attentive listener; and Mrs. Maddox proceeded.

"I want you very much, my dear Mabel, to come and dine with us to-morrow—quite quietly—scarcely any one but ourselves."

Mabel wondered at this being a matter of such importance. But she saw evidently there was some-

thing beyond. Mrs. Maddox paused, for she knew that she was on delicate ground.

"I will tell you candidly why I wish it so much," she continued. "Now, do not be angry. You won't be angry, will you? But your cousin Marmaduke" (here Mabel started, coloured deeply, and drew herself up with every mark of indignation), "your cousin Marmaduke," proceeded Mrs. Maddox, affecting not to notice these symptoms, "is coming to us for some days. And I should be so glad, so very glad, if I could see you meet him on friendly terms, and forget all the unpleasantness between you. He is such a clever man, and so agreeable. And he is making his way in the world, rising, I assure you, very rapidly. Mr. Lomax assured me that he had been asked several times to Lord Germain's, Germain House, you know, where all the clever men are invited. And the government have made him one of the new commissioners for inspecting the gutters, with 1500*l.* a year. And he writes in the *Westminster Review*. The very best article in the last number, I am told, was his. And, indeed, I should not be surprised," (here her voice became mysteriously low,) "if he were to get into parliament in case of a dissolution. It is such a pity that you cannot meet him in a friendly way."

Mabel had heard, or rather she might have heard, all this, for she sat perfectly unmoved, drawn up in a rigid posture, with a very high colour in her cheeks, and a look of which Mrs. Maddox had caught a sidelong view, and which she did not venture fairly to face. But Mrs. Maddox's eulogium had no sooner ceased than her answer was ready. She expressed no little surprise that Mrs. Maddox, an old friend, one for whom she felt the most cordial esteem, with whom she was more intimate than any one in the world, should have thought of making a proposal to her so painful and unreason-

able. She had no ill-will to Marmaduke. She was glad to hear of his rising in the world. She could meet him, if absolutely necessary, as she would any other person ; but for any thing like cordiality or friendship, such a feeling as she had to the Maddoxes for instance, and the Macdougalls, it was quite impossible.

“ You know well, my dear Mrs. Maddox,” she added, “ the principal circumstances of his conduct. You remember my poor brother Charles ” (and here Mabel’s voice faltered, for it was her only brother, whom she had doted on, of whom she was speaking). “ You know he sacrificed himself, I may say he lost his life, in extricating Marmaduke from that disgraceful affair at Gibraltar. Charles never recovered it ; and the very first thing which Marmaduke did, as soon as he was released from prison, while Charles was lying dead, was to vilify him, to impugn his word, to prevent his brother officers from showing any respect to his memory, and to endeavour to overturn all the plans which Charles had been all his life contriving for the welfare of his family. When he came to England, his first business was to sow dissension between all the branches of the family ; to dispute my father’s will ; to try to deprive me of the little pittance I possess : and all this with a show of kindness and profession of liberality, which common sense must see to be hypocrisy. The very last words my poor father said to me on his death-bed was a caution against Marmaduke ; he almost prophesied what he would do, knowing his cold selfish unprincipled sneering nature. And he intreated me, or rather, I should say, he laid his solemn injunctions on me, to abstain from any communication with him. I owe it to the memory both of my father and my brother, to have no further association with him than is absolutely necessary. I should com-

promise my own feelings and sense of right, and lose myself in public opinion, and, as far as an humble person like myself can do, lower the standard of public morals, if I overlooked these acts as if they had never been, and could feel or affect to feel to such a man the same as to a friend. You will see this, I am sure, my dearest friend, in the same light with myself, and will not urge me to place myself in a position where I could not with propriety show what I really feel, and yet by concealment I should disgrace myself in my own eyes, and the eyes of others, and only harden him in his shamelessness."

Mabel ceased—and Mrs. Maddox was silent, for she felt rather ashamed of herself; at last she took courage to hope that Mabel would not be offended, that she could quite understand the feeling; and on the whole she agreed that it was better for persons who could not cordially sympathise with and respect each other to associate together as little as possible.

"I am not offended at all," was Mabel's reply. "It would take a great deal to make me quarrel with you, whom I have known so long, and so intimately, and love very dearly; indeed, there is no one in Hawkstone whom I live with more than yourself, and I hope it always will be so,"—

"Though we do differ in religious notions," said Mrs. Maddox, recovering her spirits and smiling playfully.

"Yes," said Mabel, "though you are a Unitarian, I do not think religious opinions should ever interfere with our social friendship. Thank God, we are not bigots in Hawkstone, and there is no one, except indeed" (she checked herself) "a Papist, with whom I could not live on the most affectionate terms."

"God bless you, my dear, God bless you!" was the answer; and with a hearty and mutual kiss Mrs. Maddox retreated to the door, and Mabel put out her candles and "retired to her couch."

CHAP. IV.

MABEL was roused the next morning from a disturbed dream, in which Mr. Marmaduke Brook, assisted by Mrs. Maddox, was in the act of seizing her splendid kettle-holder, and plunging it in the gutter, by a merry peal of bells from the tower of Hawkstone church. Nothing could sound more light and cheerful. Bell took up the sound from bell, and each seemed to rival the other in ringing out some glad intelligence to the whole country round. The sun shone brightly into Mabel's room; and again the peals rang round and round, and up and down, now swelling out in full chorus, and now dying gently down, only to resume the happy clamour with renewed life and vigour. What could be the reason? A marriage? No! Miss Mabel was the sworn confidant of all the Hawkstone young ladies, and could not be taken by surprise on such a subject. Some victory, or a naval battle, perhaps? No! Though Mabel did not devote much study to the newspapers, she knew that at that time we happened to be in a profound peace, and not even to have an ally to conquer untowardly, or a fleet of his to destroy. What could be the matter? On looking from her window, to her still greater surprise, she discerned, waving on the dark grey tower, a splendid pale blue banner. Mabel rang her bell; and little Connor, the Grey girl, was sent to ascertain the news, while Mabel herself pursued her toilet. Connor had not far to go; for Mabel, with a truly liberal and charitable spirit, was in the habit of maintaining that politics, as well as religion, ought not to be con-

sidered in the friendly associations of life, and that every one should be allowed to follow his own conscience, whether in obeying or disobeying laws. She had, therefore, felt no scruple in establishing her quarters in the house of Messrs. Silkem, the radical linendrapers. And Messrs. Silkem willingly sent up to Mabel the Morning Chronicle, which had just arrived, containing all the news. The first words which caught Mabel's eye, in large letters, were "Glorious Triumph of Dissenters!" The next were something about "inevitable downfall of a tyrannical and priest-ridden Church!" and, without much difficulty, Mabel found that the bells were ringing and the flag flying on the grey tower of the old church to announce that a liberal measure had just been carried in parliament, by the hands of a conservative ministry; a measure on which she had heard both Mrs. and Charles Bevan declare turned virtually the whole question of an established religion in this country. It seemed strange: but then there was at Hawkstone, as in other towns, a radical and unitarian churchwarden; and poor old Dr. Grant was too infirm to enter into the dispute on the right of ringing the bells, and Mr. Bentley, of course, could not move. And so Mabel, a warm Conservative at heart, and whose errors were only overflowings of real benevolence and piety ill instructed, was compelled to dress herself to the sound of the tuneful church bells, ringing out merrily the downfall of the Church, and with nearly a darkened room, lest she should have before her eyes the spectacle of that odious pale blue banner, floating over the grey pinnacles of that ancient tower.

Her toilet was soon over, and her breakfast despatched; but the latter not without many movements from the table, and searchings among heaps

of papers and references to drawers, in order for Mabel to lose no time, but to arrange her business for the day while she was eating her meals. For this day, like every other day in the week, was a day of business. And sometimes Mabel sighed, and sometimes she asked for pity and sympathy; but at all times she felt a little excitement and sense of importance, which might (such is the frailty of our nature) rise occasionally into something like vaingloriousness, as she thought how many things could not be done without her. And to-day there was the Grey School committee, and the National School to be visited. And Mr. Bentley's new plans for the Sunday School to be talked over with four or five other ladies, and the last private meeting with three or four others to originate a new ladies' association for the discouragement of drunkenness, and the accounts of the Tract Society to be audited, and the report of the Ladies' District Visiting Club to be drawn up; and, greatest of all, the first meeting of the Ladies' Society for the Conversion of the Irish, which was to be held in the great ball-room at the Bell, and where Mr. Bentley and Mr. Bryant would each make a speech, and perhaps pay a compliment to her "laborious and energetic offices as secretary," amidst cries of "hear!" and "hear!" and the amiable congratulations of female friends to cover her natural confusion. The day was filled up to the brim. Still there was another object on which she resolved, not without some misgivings, to bestow the first hour of the morning. Why did not Mrs. Bevan come to the last night's meeting? Was there, as she feared, an anticipation of withdrawing from it? Did Mrs. Bevan disapprove of any thing that had been done? And Mabel could not rest till these questions were solved.

Attired, as she always was attired, in her respect-

able economical black silk cloak, and her respectable never-wearing-out black velvet bonnet, and, sole relic of wealthier days, her handsome boa, Mabel sallied forth—for in novels distinguished persons always move in that way—into the High Street of Hawkstone. There was seemingly a little bustle. Two or three persons were congregated here, one or two there. Mr. Brown the grocer was holding a confabulation with Mr. More the chemist and Mr. Alley the shoemaker, at the shoemaker's door. A little knot had gathered round the stable entrance of the Bell, waiting for the arrival of the Highflyer coach from London. And at the corner of Westgate Street, turning down to the Bank, Mr. Morgan was in close conversation with Mr. Lomax, and evidently on some deep subject, for one of Mr. M.'s hands had seized Mr. L.'s button, and the other was busily employed in laying down the law and dictating some line of conduct, with a half-patronising and half-reverential air, to which Mr. L. was listening condescendingly submissive, and not without gratification, though at the same time importantly grave. As she passes the other little groups, they make way for her with more than ordinary deference. Mr. Brown takes off his hat; Mr. More smiles significantly, and retreats within the shop to avoid touching her dress. The hostlers at the Bell look respectful and admiring. But both the gentlemen at the corner are cool—cooler than usual; and a hasty good morning is all that they vouchsafe. "But then they are evidently talking on business," thought Mabel, who was not used to cool looks, and by no means liked them.

But what makes Mabel on a sudden start, and look in wonder at that long dead brick wall which runs at the back of Mr. Aspland's garden? Why does the colour come to her cheek, and her heart

begin to flutter, and she looks out to see if any one is behind her? Mabel's eyes were arrested, as well they might be, by her own name, in large white letters, three feet high, and half a foot broad, painted with artistic skill on the whole length of that red brick wall, "Brook for ever!" Mabel rubbed her eyes, but it was no delusion. There was the wall, and there her name; and there, what struck her most, the magic words "for ever!" She was greatly touched, flattered, surprised; but still modestly, and with a deep sense how little she deserved such a testimony of popular approbation. She knew, indeed, that she was of some little use to the town; that the poor people always liked to see her at their cottages; that the school could not do without her; that she was secretary to no less than a dozen societies; that her whole time was spent in doing good. Still, like the gentleman from Oxford who went up to London the day after he had obtained his first class, and entered the Opera-house just as the whole house rose up to thunder out their applause on the entrance of the king, she was not prepared for such a public manifestation of popular feeling. It was too much. She preferred being left in retirement, doing good by stealth: and, afraid lest persons should gather round her, she put her parasol before her face, and, casting a side glance on the gratifying inscription, she passed on. But for Mabel's modesty there was no escape; she had scarcely turned the corner of King Street, going down Prince's Lane, than once more, on the front of Mr. Russel's old malt-house, there stood the same letters—the letters of her own name; not quite so large, indeed, and this time in black paint instead of white, but coupled with a longer suffix, "Brook and Religious Liberty!" Quite overcome, she thought of those charitable sentiments, which she had so often ap-

plauded, and professed, and with which she had endeavoured to hold together the sisterly societies of Hawkstone, "without distinction of sect or party;" and could not but confess that, humble as she was, her heart indeed did merit this tribute to her Christian benevolence. A little bewildered at finding herself thus the marked object of popular gratitude and admiration, before she saw clearly where she was going, a rough "by-your-leave" compelled her to make way for a dirty, fustian-clad, ragged-haired man, with a short ladder on one shoulder, a mass of paper hanging over one arm, and a black paste-pot, with a huge brush sticking in it, in his other hand. She had just time to save her silk cloak from the paste-pot, and to cast a look of reproachful wonder on a rude man, who showed so little deference for a person so extensively and deservedly beloved, when the bill-sticker proceeded to fix his ladder against the wall, to smear his paste over it, to transfer a long sheet of paper from his arm to the surface, to descend his ladder, and vanish in a minute. Mabel looked up as she passed;—and once again,—conceive her astonishment,—her own name, M. Brook, in large letters, at the foot of some copious printing. What to think she knew not. Short-sighted as she was, it took a little time to find her glass, and examine the singular phenomenon. And then, alas! the mystery was dispelled. She read at the top of the paper, "To the free and independent Electors of the Borough of Hawkstone." She read one sentence, which showed her that the address proceeded from her amiable cousin Marmaduke, who solicited the honour of their votes at the approaching parliamentary election. Mabel passed on hastily, very much surprised, a little ashamed, a little disappointed, half laughing at herself for suffering such silly thoughts in her head, more than half angry

at her cousin for presuming to come forward on the radical interest and disturb the peace of Hawkstone, after having behaved so ill to herself: and yet the thought flitted past—it is a respectable thing to be cousin to a member of parliament! And before the thought had passed by there was a friendly hand placed within her own, and a pair of laughing eyes were looking up in her face, with an ironical congratulation. It was Anne Morgan, who had just returned from one of her district visits, in which she had been reading to a poor sick man, and endeavouring to show him the necessity of coming to church, but without being exactly able to explain to him why he might not just as well go to chapel; and Anne was not sorry to escape from her difficult task of enlightening ignorance with ignorance. There were kind allusions to last evening's agreeable meeting—kind hopes that Mabel was not tired with her gaiety—and kind hopes from Mabel herself, that Mr. and Mrs. Morgan and all the children were well.

Yes, all well; Mr. Morgan tolerable. “But,” said Anne, sinking down into seriousness, “you must have heard of his being called up last night. Poor Mary Vincent—extremely ill, they say, with the typhus fever. And my father was obliged to go there again this morning. But we hope she is a little better.” Poor Mary Vincent! she, who would not go to the ball because she could not dance with the misery of her fellow-creatures in her mind. And she, it might be added, the simple, retired, pure-minded, sensible girl, who was growing up in the village of Hurst to be a blessing to her parents, and a pearl beyond price to any clergyman who could win her affections, and associate her with him in the manifold duties of his parish. And now she was lying on a bed of sickness—perhaps never to rise

from it again. And many hearts, as Mabel knew, were wrapt up in her as in a precious treasure; and one, above all, whom Mabel thought, with comfort, that she was not likely to meet where she was now going, for she believed Charles Bevan to be in Oxford.

It was, therefore, with no little dismay that in Mrs. Bevan's passage she observed a hat and stick on the table; and, on entering the little drawing-room, which served also for a library, she found himself, as usual, with his large book before him, and his pencil in his hand, and his note-book at his side. His mother's chair and her work-table showed she had not left the room long. And Charles was sitting with his back to the door, with his head resting on his hand, but not reading; for Mabel observed afterwards that the leaves of his book were blistered with tears. But Charles had been brought up in a school which did not encourage scenes — which looked on human feelings — real feelings, that is, and innocent — too reverently to tolerate display of them. If there was one thing which he despised, it was theatrical sensibility. And thus the sight of Mabel quieted him at once; and he could enter into the common topics of a visit without betraying himself. He had come down, he said, from London unexpectedly last night, and took to himself the blame of his mother's absence from the Dorcas Society. And his mother soon appeared to answer for herself; — her usual quietness of manner, shaded over by evident sorrow, and her eye glancing unobservedly on her son with an expression of affectionate compassion, which went to Mabel's heart.

“A note from Mr. Morgan, ma'am,” said the servant, following his mistress into the room. And Mabel saw Charles take up his pencil, and begin

writing hurriedly, as if not daring to look up. His mother's hand shook violently as she attempted to open it ; but, to Mabel's great delight, her face relaxed as she read it ; and, putting it before her son, with a slight pressure of the hand, returned, Oh ! how warmly ! she turned to Mabel to inform her that it was a line from Mr. Morgan, who had just returned from Hurst, to say that things were going on well, and all danger was over. Mabel only saw that Charles's eyes were turned up for one moment with an expression of thankfulness and piety such as she had never seen before ; and then, while the two ladies were in conversation, he folded up his papers, and without being observed left the room.

Nearly half an hour had elapsed before he returned, with a composed and cheerful countenance, — so much so, that Mabel was emboldened to look him full in the face, and even to appeal to him as arbiter on the discussion which she was then holding with his mother. "I am explaining to Miss Brook," said Mrs. Bevan, "the reasons which we were talking over last night, and which have induced me to think of leaving the Dorcas Society. But I would rather she should hear them from you ; for I am not quite sure that it is not an evil sign where ladies undertake to be teachers, and to lead instead of following."

Charles smiled, with something of an affirmative in his smile which Mabel did not like. Besides this, she was not a little afraid of him, for their opinions often differed ; and she was conscious of something defective in her own system, what it was precisely she could not tell, which made her uncomfortable in his superiority.

"Are you aware, my dear mother," he said, "what you are doing, — proposing to me to undertake a war with all the ladies' societies in Hawkstone,

with Miss Brook at their head, and all the liberality and charity in the country to come to their rescue, myself almost single handed? I must expect to have my eyes torn out with the points of buckles, as the Athenian ladies destroyed their rebel, or to be pricked to death with scissors, like poor L'Escuyer, in the church at Avignon, by the ladies of the French revolution. For, whenever there is a revolution there you will certainly find that ladies, like other members of society, fall out of their proper places, and that they are the cause of the greatest mischief. In the Lord George Gordon riots," he continued, affecting to look grave, "it is a well-known fact, that the lower ranks of London ladies formed the most troublesome and destructive portion of the mobs — burning houses, and bursting open prisons. And I need not remind you of the *poisardes* of Paris, who stormed Versailles and overawed the convention, or of the more genteel Parisian ladies, who subsequently petitioned the Assembly, that they might be allowed to trail a pike in the Champ de Mars, and who used to take their work and sit every morning under the guillotine."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mabel, half-offended and half-perplexed. "Do you seriously mean to compare us with those horrible wretches? Are these your new Oxford notions?"

Charles smiled at her warmth. "No, my dear Miss Brook, far be it from me to make any such comparison; and far be it from you to lay upon poor Oxford all the strange notions which strange men belonging to it may take into their heads. Poor Oxford has enough to answer for already, has it not?" he asked, laughingly. And Mabel looked grave; for, though she had not found time to learn what Oxford notions really were, Mr. Bentley had

preached a most powerful sermon against the new heresy, as he called it, and always shook his head with a profoundly melancholy expression whenever the subject was mentioned, as it often was mentioned in the little Hawkstone coteries. Nor must we forget that she had more than once seen the *Record* newspaper, which distinctly charged the whole University with popery; and the statement being in print, and moreover in a religious newspaper, who could hesitate to believe it?

"But you look with such contempt," she said, plaintively, "on us poor women, as if we were wholly useless, mere slaves, fit only to talk scandal or sew silk."

"Ask my mother," said Charles, "if I speak contemptuously of women." And his voice softened as he spoke, and his eye became graver, and Mabel thought moistened, for his thoughts just then had turned on Mr. Morgan's note. "Be assured," he continued, "no man ever spoke contemptuously of women without having a bad heart as well as a bad head. I believe that God made them to be a helpmeet for man, — to be his great earthly support, his comfort, his encouragement in trials, his nurse, his earliest teacher, his last friend, his mother, and sister, and wife. And without mother, and sister, and wife, what would man be? And yet," he added, "there may be a peculiar sphere in which only they ought to act; and they may overstep their duties, and be too active, too zealous, too enlightened, as it is called. And they may want guidance and control even in their best of actions, their charities, and devotions, — may they not?"

"Certainly," said Mabel; "and yet what would you do in this town of Hawkstone, for instance, if it were not for ladies? Dr. Grant paralytic; poor

Mr. Bentley fagged to death with his three services on the Sunday, and all the weekly duty, and a population of thousands to take care of, with only 150*l.* a year. How can he attend to the schools, or visit the poor, or manage the hundred things which are implied in the care of a parish—much more now the manufactories have brought here such a number of poor, and there is so much sickness among them? No gentleman can attend to these things; they cannot teach in the schools, or attend to the sick, or have any thing to do with cutting out flannels, and distributing tracts. What is to become of the town if the ladies are not to be active?"

"And you may add," subjoined Charles, "what is to become of the whole country if the towns are not taken care of—if the ladies are not active—if such masses of population are brought together as we see throughout England, to ferment and rot in heaps, without any one to give them religion, or to stand over them constantly with a high and parental authority, acting on them like the eye of a parent on a headstrong child, not by force, which soon must fail, but by gratitude, kindness, shame, advice, assistance, admonition—the ten thousand secret influences which regulate the human heart, and which no books, no teaching, can create, nothing but personal, close, constant, minute, affectionate association with a power above them."

"And this, then," said Mabel, triumphantly, "must be done by ladies?"

"Much of it, undoubtedly. I fear my fingers would move but clumsily, if I took my mother's needle out of her hand, and set to work on that white lily which she is embroidering. And I fear also, my dear Miss Brook, that you would be a little puzzled at these strange hieroglyphics," (and

he pointed to his Greek folio). "Each of us to his natural vocation. Educating young children, nursing the sick, regulating families—above all, exhibiting without your knowing it a spectacle of purity, gentleness, and affection to us whose hearts are so often seared and tainted by the rough commerce of the world, — these are the tasks which nature has assigned to you, and with which we are not to interfere. And in these you can do incalculable service, both to the Church and to the country. No Church can be perfect without you. And how highly the Church and churchmen value you, you may learn even from the simple fact, that the Church itself has been named with your name, and delights in assuming your relations as a mother and a spouse. Therefore never charge me with speaking contemptuously of women."

Mabel listened, and certainly felt flattered. But why Mr. Bevan should have spoken of services *to the Church* — why he did not say, in disseminating the Gospel, or in making men Christians, or doing them good generally, she did not exactly see. It was one of his strange Oxford notions; and she felt sorry that he was so bigoted.

"Shall I tell you," continued Charles, as he stood before her, and perceived what was passing in her mind, by her not venturing to look up, — "shall I tell you, why I laid so much stress on the word Church? Or are you afraid lest I should convert you to popery?"

"No, not exactly," said Mabel, half-peeping from under her bonnet, and yet a little afraid.

"I spoke of the Church," said Charles, "because if we are to engage either in serving God or in blessing his creatures, — that is, if we are to undertake any work of any description either from piety or charity, — we must undertake it as the servants

of God, according as he wills, in submission to that authority which he has placed in the world for that purpose. What would you say if some active clever boy in the National School, wishing to benefit his schoolfellows and do good, were to put himself at the head of a class and insist on teaching them their lessons, instead of the master, or without consulting the master, or when the master forbade it,— would you think the excuse sufficient that he was most zealous in doing good? Whether he did good or not, would be another question. But the very attempt would be an act of insubordination, would it not? and as such you would punish it. The children are placed under the governors of the school, are they not? and no one has a right to interfere with them but the governors themselves, or persons authorised by them.”

“Certainly,” said Mabel, for she was one of the most active governors herself, and no one was more ready to vindicate their claim to an implicit obedience. Not two days before Patty Sykes had been sent away at her suggestion, because Patty’s mother had come to the school and interfered with some regulations of the committee, that no parent should speak with the children during school-time.

“Think also,” continued Charles, “that to do good to man is not an easy task. To make them wise and virtuous, and religious, happy upon earth, and fit for happiness in heaven,—this is not a light thing. We must be sure that what we teach them is true—sure that what we would have them do is really good—sure that God’s blessing is upon us, that he is not against us, frustrating our empty efforts to do good without him, or against him: and unless there is God’s own voice confirming us in all these things, what do we know of them?”

"Nothing," said Mabel, "certainly."

"And how can we hear this voice," he continued, "unless we hear it from his ministers, from those whom he has sent himself, and specially commissioned to deliver his message to mankind?"

"We hear it from the Bible," said Mabel, reproachfully.

"We hear it from the Bible, assuredly," said Charles. "But the Bible is but a document put into our hands by the ministers to whom it is entrusted by God himself. If I sent to you a message by a friend, and that friend gave you a paper containing the message, but containing also an injunction that you should attend to the explanation of that friend, ask his advice, consult his opinion, respect him as my own representative, would you say that the document alone, whether you understood it or not, doubted about it or not, was all that you would look to,—that you would listen to no further information from that friend himself of the interpretation I put upon the document?"

Mabel was silent, for she had heard so often from Mr. Bentley of "the Bible and the Bible alone," and of the attempts of the Oxford heretics to supersede the Bible by tradition, that she knew, as she afterwards declared, that something was wrong in the argument, though what it was she could not discover: and as Mr. Bentley had never explained to her that there was a considerable difference between a power in human hands to decree articles of faith beyond and opposed to the Bible, and a power in the same hands to convey down, under suitable checks against corruption, the same truths which are contained in the Bible, Mabel stumbled, as other persons less ignorant and not more well intentioned do, on the fatal word "tradition," and already lamented

that she had ever come within such a popish atmosphere.

"But what has this to do with the Dorcas Society?" she ventured to ask, in hope of escaping from her difficulties.

"I wished," said Charles, as he smiled good-naturedly at the sight of her perplexities (for Mabel, with all her little ignorances, had too much goodness of character not to be a favourite with him)—"I wished to suggest that when ladies, like other persons, do undertake missions of piety or offices of charity, they should place themselves under the guidance of the Church, that is, of God's own appointed ministers of piety and charity, and act as a part of that body, according to its rules, with a constant reference to its welfare and principles."

"Surely," said Mabel; "but where is the Church? Are not all who preach the Gospel ministers of God?"

"Not exactly," answered Charles. "If the letter I send you by the messenger is stolen from him, and presented to you by another person, that person does not become by the mere fact of such a presentation my representative and minister, does he?"

"No," said Mabel.

"And if persons not appointed by God do happily preach the word of God, does this make them ambassadors of God?"

"No, certainly."

"But who are appointed? How am I, a poor ignorant person, with none of those great books within my reach, and if they were in my reach, without means to understand them,—how am I to decide who are the true ministers of God, when they

all put into my hands the same Bible, and each claims to be such himself?"

What Charles's answer would have been to this problem it is difficult to say; for at this moment the door opened, a morning visitor from the country was announced; and Mabel, gathering up her black silk pelisse and adjusting her boa, shook hands with both Charles and his mother, whether cordially or not she could not exactly decide, and took her leave with a promise that her question should be put again at some more favourable time.

CHAP. V.

AND who is the lady with the green silk cloak and red-ribboned bonnet, who has seized Mr. Bentley's arm at the corner of King Street, close by that large house with the little house fastened on at its side, and bearing on its brass plate the name of Mr. Atkinson, solicitor?

It is Mrs. Maddox; and she is busily repeating to Mr. Bentley, who, as chairman of the Ladies' Branch Bible Society, cannot but listen attentively to one of the chief members of the committee, all the information which had been collected respecting the mysterious stranger at the Bell.

"He is a Papist," said Mrs. Maddox; and Mr. Bentley's face assumed a rueful look.

"He wears a cross," said Mrs. Maddox; and Mr. Bentley might have pointed at the cross over the church porch, but by chance he did not think of it.

"He fasts," continued Mrs. Maddox. And Mr. Bentley might have informed her that in one of the pages of the Church of England Prayer Book there were especial injunctions for fasting. But the fact was, that Bentley's studies had not lain in the rubric, and he never thought of it.

"He has a breviary," continued Mrs. Maddox. And here again, as Bentley had never read a breviary, he could only answer,

"You do not say so?"

"He would give nothing to the subscription for the fire," said Mrs. Maddox. And she had intended

to conclude with a request, that if he should come forward on Lord Claremont's interest for the borough of Hawkstone, Mr. Bentley would refuse him his vote, and give it to Mr. Marmaduke Brook, the clever young man, who was then staying in her own house; but Bentley was obliged to interrupt her by explaining, that the stranger had given something—a very large sum—one hundred guineas; that he had given it last Sunday among the alms offered at the Holy Communion, and Bentley had found it in a small packet folded up with a note to himself, expressing a wish that it might be appropriated, if the clergyman and churchwardens thought fit, to the relief of the sufferers by the fire. Mrs. Maddox was thrown back surprised—even dismayed; for what chance could Mr. Marmaduke Brook, with his 1500*l.* commissionership, have against such means and such liberality?

“Mere bribery,” she said. But Bentley checked her observation. He did not think it necessary to add, that in the same slip of paper there was a request that eighty of the hundred should be appropriated to such sufferers as were members of the Church, and the other twenty only given to Dissenters in case they were in considerable distress, and could not obtain assistance from the frequenters of their several chapels.

“Strange!” thought Bentley—“very illiberal:” but so it was. And Bentley forgot just at that moment the injunction of the Apostle “to do good unto all men, but especially unto those that are of the household of faith.”

For more reasons than a mere love of gossip, which, as Aristotle tells us, is natural to all men, Mrs. Maddox would probably have hastened away at once to carry this intelligence to Mr. Marmaduke's committee, then sitting in secret conference in her own

drawing-room. But just as she was wishing Bentley good-morning, who should issue out from Mr. Atkinson's brass-knocked brass-plated door, and escorted to the door with very deferential politeness by the grave Mr. Atkinson in person, but the mysterious stranger himself! He passed Mr. Bentley with a gentlemanly bow of recognition, but found considerable difficulty in executing the same manœuvre with Mrs. Maddox; for what with the surprise, and the notion of being so close to a Papist, and the indignation at his standing against Mr. Brook, and at the same time a little awe inspired by his great dignity of manner, and a little confusion at the consciousness of her own thoughts, besides a doubt whether she ought to notice him, and a resolution to toss up her head as he passed — all these things so embarrassed poor Mrs. Maddox, that shifting backwards and forwards from side to side, she ended in very nearly pushing her parasol into his eye, and compelled him, with an apology for his awkwardness, to step out into the road. But the apology was gracious, the voice refined, the manner noble. And Mrs. Maddox, after achieving her evolution, could not help looking back at his tall commanding figure. She then recollected (it is singular how recollections of the kind do come upon us) that it was her duty, a duty which she reproached herself much for having so long neglected, to call on Mrs. Atkinson to inquire after the health of little Jesse Atkinson, the youngest but four of Mrs. Atkinson's ten children, and who had pricked herself with a thorn a full fortnight back, and had been suffering from a swelled finger. She moved to the door, rang the bell, and to her great delight Mrs. Atkinson was at home. But Mrs. Atkinson, a plain, sensible, domestic person, little stirred by curiosity, little disposed to communicate her husband's secrets, and

caring for little in the world but her own family duties, and Mr. Atkinson's comfort, and her ten children's health and happiness, was not the person from whom much information could be extracted on the subject of the mysterious stranger. She was surprised at the call, for there were political reasons why Mrs. Maddox did not call often, — Mr. Atkinson was a Conservative, Mr. Maddox a Radical, — she was surprised at the tender inquiry after Jesse's finger, for Jesse's finger had been quite well ten days ago. And when Mrs. Maddox's careless well-managed "by-the-by" (for Mrs. Maddox was rather an intriguer, and understood diplomacy) had brought forward the subject of the stranger, Mrs. Atkinson knew nothing about him. She believed he had some business with Mr. Atkinson—he had been often to the house, closeted with Mr. A. in the library — was fond of children.

"Oh, yes," cried little Willy, who was in the room playing; "and do you know, yesterday, when I was in the library, he came in and took me on his knee and asked me my name, and told me such a pretty story!"

"How artful and electioneering!" thought Mrs. Maddox.

"What was his name?"

Mrs. Atkinson did not know.

"Was he rich?"

She could not tell.

"How long would he stay in Hawkstone?"

She had not heard.

"Had Mrs. Atkinson seen him?"

Yes, for a minute, but only for a minute, except at church, when he sat in Mr. Atkinson's pew.

"At church!" exclaimed Mrs. Maddox. "Why, he is a Papist!"

"I should think not," observed Miss Simpson,

the governess, who had been sitting by in silence ; for every time that I have been to eleven o'clock prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, he has been at church, and also on the last Saint's day."

"How singular," thought Mrs. Maddox, and also Mrs. Atkinson.

"What can a gentleman have to do at church on a week day? He is not a clergyman, is he?"

"No :—" the eldest Miss Atkinson had remarked one day that he wore a light-coloured waistcoat.

"Any relation to Lord Claremont?"

No one knew.

"Had he been asked to dinner?"

It was a bold question, and Mrs. Atkinson felt offended. But Mrs. Maddox's patience was exhausted.

"Yes ; Mr. Atkinson, she believed, without mentioning it to her, had asked him to dine last Friday, which he had declined on the ground that he never dined out on Fridays."

"He has been very liberal in an odd way about the poor people at the fire," observed Mrs. Maddox, severely.

"Has he?" said Mrs. Atkinson.

And Mrs. Maddox in despair rose up and took her leave, ejaculating mentally, or, as it has been correctly defined, not ejaculating at all, but keeping close within her own breast, the exclamation, "Oh, that impracticable woman!"

And in the mean time what had become of the stranger? He had turned into the high street, not unfollowed by curious eyes, had crossed over the bridge, passed by the huge, hideous manufactory with its hundred windows, and its tall, smoke-vomiting chimney ; from whence he had pursued the high road, until he reached the old lodge gate of the Priory, and here he entered, without asking leave.

“Please, sir, be you going to the house?” cried an old grey-headed man, endeavouring to pursue him, and warn him from trespassing.

“Yes, my good friend,” said the stranger, returning, and seeming to recollect himself. “Pray, is it shown?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the old man.

“Is any one there?”

“No one, sir, and has not been for many a long year since Lady Esther’s death, — all gone away to foreign parts.”

The stranger said nothing, but walked on — and he walked with folded arms, slowly, and stopping at times, as if oppressed by a multitude of recollections. And then he looked up and round with a searching eye, as if to see if any thing was missing from an old and much-loved picture. And as the road, winding under its dark masses of wood, rose gradually along the side of a steep declivity, he stopped here and there as at well-known resting-places, and seemed to search in the blue landscape, now nearly obscured by trees, for a distant spire, the gleam of the river beneath, the grey smoke of Hawkstone, as for old familiar objects which he longed to behold again. At one point he struck off from the road into the tangled thicket, until he reached a knoll projecting over the river, and commanding one of its fairest reaches. And the old bench which he found there, decayed and fallen from its support, and furred with fungi and moss, he took up reverentially, and replaced, as if it were something that he valued. And further on he stopped to examine an old beech tree, under which some deer had been reposing; and the grey silvery bark still bore on it the traces of initials which the stranger stooped down to examine, and was obliged to lean against the trunk and unbutton his coat, as

if to recover breath from some internal pressure. His walk was soon resumed. And yet his object was not the house; for on reaching the summit of the hill the road turned down again between two bold swelling downs tufted with beech and oak, and matted in parts with brown fern and thickets of holly and thorn. The deer were lying in groupes on the sides of the valley: and nearly at the bottom, on a gentle eminence, rose the grey, gabled, deep-windowed mansion, with its avenue of cedar and chestnut stretching out into the lower park, and, close by it, a small churchyard and church nearly hidden in overgrown plantations of evergreens. Even under a grey October sky, with the damp dews upon the grass, and the sere leaf dropping from the trees, it was a scene which might well attract a passer-by to pause. But now all was bright and summer-like, and the old windows of the mansion were lighted up with a bright afternoon sun, and the very air was sweet and gladsome. And the stranger did pause, but only for a minute; and then, instead of descending to the house, he diverged across the turf, following a narrow sheep-path almost buried in moss, and threading a wild forest brake which crowned the top of the park.

“Are you going to the ruins, sir?” said a shepherd boy who met him. “You won’t be able to find your way by yourself, sir. Can I show you, sir?”

“No, I thank you,” said the stranger; and he plunged into the wood, and made his way as if he knew each step, through brake and briar, and matted wood and coppice, till he reached the green sward again, and below him, embosomed in that quiet solitary dell, with the oak and the beech clustered round it, and the yew trees and junipers studding every knoll, and the little stream fretting

and chafing under its rocky bank, there stood the ruin.

And as it broke upon him, once more the stranger stopped, and sat, or almost sank down, on the trunk of an old uprooted oak tree, gazing on those grey relics with thoughts far deeper than mere admiration of their beauty.

And yet they were beautiful indeed. Few monastic buildings had escaped the plunder and desecration of Henry the Eighth's times so well as Hawkstone Priory. Much of the outer wall, with its gateway overhung with ivy, was still standing. One gable of the refectory and part of its oriel window hung together, but almost in the air: the prior's garden could yet be traced, though a slim ash had shot up by the tall chimney of the prior's lodgings: and two arches of the cloisters, exquisitely wrought and wreathed with ivy, had been spared in the general devastation, as if to show what the church had raised, and the state had destroyed. But the chapel was the principal feature. The roof, indeed, had fallen in, but one whole row of windows, with tracery almost running wild in its richness, and even fragments of painted glass still discernible in the upper compartments, showed that Hawkstone Priory had been the work of no mean hand. Two clustered pillars still rose up from the green turf, where the antechapel had stood. The great east window, nearly gutted, retained only one slender shaft, supporting a hanging fragment of masonry, which threatened every moment to fall. But through it was seen the bright eastern sky and the bank beyond the river, with its grey rock and gnarled trunks and brake of gorse, melted down into a hazy softness. And the stranger's eye wandered over it, not without thought, and then fixed on a little projecting oratory still perfect in all its parts, and of

which the battlements and pinnacles had been even recently repaired, which was attached to the eastern extremity. At last he seemed to summon up resolution, descended into the dell, and as he entered within the walls of the chapel, roofless as it was, he reverently uncovered his head, for he stood on consecrated ground, ground which no act of robbery or tyranny could ever render common.

Without stopping to examine the masses of carving, grotesque and luxuriant, with which the ground was cumbered, he advanced at once to the east end, paused before the place where the altar had stood, and inclined his head, and then approached a strong iron-grated door, fixed in the wall, and fastened with chains and padlocks, long since covered with rust. Twenty years had elapsed since that door had been opened; and when last it had been opened the stranger remembered well how he had stood as a boy beside it, drest out with the trappings of woe, and had watched with a cold awe that nearly dried up tears a long funereal train lower through it into its deep dark resting place the coffin of the being whom he loved best in the world. How many things had passed over his head since that melancholy hour! How many things were yet to come, if it should please God to enable him to accomplish the plans which were forming in his breast! How much must he sacrifice, how much had he given up for ever, if he was to abide by their execution! Should he have strength to do it? And that tall, commanding, noble form turned away from the iron grate, and fell upon his face before the altar, with his lip quivering and the tears streaming down his cheeks, praying God in the hour of temptation to be his guide and defender, and even now in the day of peril to save his holy Church.

CHAP. VI.

BUT the stranger is leaving the ruins hastily, and looks back as he ascends the side of the valley to listen to some merry light-hearted music—a fife and flute, and even a drum, which, mingled with approaching voices and the murmur of a cheerful crowd, is approaching through the wood below. They issue from the trees in gay procession; first the band, then a body of respectable looking men in blue coats with white wands, then, four and four in lengthened line, men, and women, and children, all drest in holiday clothes, gay and smiling, and each bearing teacups in their hands, and some of them teakettles. It is the Hawkstone Temperance Society, met to celebrate their third anniversary by a merry and innocent tea-drinking amidst the ruins of the priory. And the rubbish in the chapel is soon cleared sufficiently to arrange the deal tables on their tressels; and no place so convenient as the altar to light three or four fires, each with their simmering kettle. And the cakes are produced from the baskets, and the young persons are all seated in rows with their clean cups before them, so decent and quiet, so very respectable. Who shall complain of the progress of society, or of the state of our manufacturing population? The signal is given; and Mr. Bowler, a neighbouring squire, with his bald shining head and good-natured face, is pressed by Mr. Bentley, and Mr. Bryant, and Mr. Armstrong the Baptist minister, and Mr. Howell the Independent minister, and Mr. Mason the

Quaker, and Mr. Priestley the Unitarian, all of them pressing him (he having consented ten days ago to submit to being pressed) to take the chair. For who more fit to preside over a moral and religious social meeting than Mr. Bowler? a good, kind man, a justice of the peace, and, above all (it made it so respectable, so free from party or sectarian spirit), a layman. And Mr. Bowler therefore is moved into the chair, and Mr. Bentley, and Mr. Bryant, and Mr. Armstrong, and Mr. Howell, and Mr. Mason, and Mr. Priestley, range themselves by his side. There is a grace to be said, and Mr. Bowler looks round deferentially to ask which of the *clergy-men* is to say it; and the other clergymen look deferentially to Mr. Bentley, as if anxious to pay him a compliment, and therefore Mr. Bentley says grace. But, as one of the children belonging to the National School remarked to the child sitting next her, it was not the same grace which Mr. Bentley said when the National School children had roast beef and plum pudding at the coronation, for then he had ended it in the same form in which the prayers in the Prayer Book ended; now he left this out. They did not know that Mr. Priestley, the Unitarian minister, was now sitting opposite him, and that Mr. Bentley had too much delicacy to hurt his feelings by introducing any allusion to peculiar doctrines. The tea was drank, the cake eaten, with hearty relish, but temperately, as became the occasion; and as they emptied cup after cup, there was a conscious gravity about the process, and little side glancings of eyes to see if others were looking; and the generality seemed to sit uneasy on the benches; as if they did not exactly know what to do with their hands. And the conversation was rather forced, with long pauses between, except when some bolder spirit, anxious to enliven the

meeting cried aloud for more tea, and ostentatiously swallowed it, with many self-congratulations that it could not get into his head. But then the Temperance Society was a voluntary meeting assembled to do that of themselves which neither God commanded nor man enforced ; and, somehow or another, voluntary acts of this kind cannot be done without persons thinking of themselves, and therefore at times feeling awkward. But the awkwardness all vanished when a loud rapping on the table was heard at the upper end, and Mr. Bowler's bald head and sleek good-humoured face, with all eyes upturned to it, was seen rising to address the meeting. Unhappily the exact address itself has been lost to posterity by the loss of the reporter's notes, but as Mr. Bowler will make nearly the same speech at the next anniversary, and indeed at every other religious meeting in which he will be asked to take the chair, those who are curious to hear it may still hope for a chance of success. It began, we know, with "ladies and gentlemen," at which the little boys and girls, and the young men from the factory made loud demonstrations of applause. It then proceeded to enlarge on the incapacity of Mr. Bowler himself for the high and distinguished office which he had been invited to fill, with many humble protestations of his want of talents, and learning, and eloquence, in which the meeting seemed contentedly to acquiesce, and did not make against them such decided remonstrances and denials as Mr. Bowler had expected : Mr. Bentley, indeed, said "no, no," but it was uttered with a faint voice, and did not reach farther than Mr. Bowler himself, who bowed gratefully and modestly, but still as conscious that Mr. Bentley was right and he himself was wrong.

A sentence followed in a different strain, begin-

ning with a "But;" and when Mr. Bowler had enlarged in the most glowing and pathetic terms on his devotion to the welfare of his fellow-creatures, and especially of the Temperance Society, "an institution which formed an æra in the world, and on which the safety of the world depended," all his hearers felt their own importance rise into enthusiasm, and the tables echoed with hammerings, and the ivy wreaths hanging round the mullions of the windows actually waved with the commotion. Another congratulatory remark on the harmony of these social meetings—on the delight of seeing around him so many *clergymen* of different persuasions, all agreeing to sink sectarian distinctions and to unite in the common good of the people committed to their care,—was loudly cheered by the dissenters. And Mr. Bryant, and Mr. Mason, and Mr. Priestley, took the opportunity of stretching their hands across to Mr. Bentley in the sight of the meeting; at which proof of fraternal charity the uproar became general. And Bentley gave his hand in return, though he felt somewhat embarrassed at this cordial assumption of equality; and as he looked up, his eye caught on one of the delicately carved corbels—a bishop's face, quiet, but firm and severe, which seemed to frown on him reproachfully. But the fancy was soon dispelled, for the pith of Mr. Bowler's speech was coming; and, as with honest cheerful face he told two ludicrous stories, illustrating the advantages of temperance, every body laughed with him; and every body in good humour followed him as he subsided into his chair with loud applause, and "one cheer more."

And now the chairman, having wiped his face and recovered his breath, looked at a slip of paper in his hand, and then mysteriously glanced at Mr. Priestley,

who had been biting his lips and affecting to look unconcerned ever since Mr. Bowler had been on his legs. And Mr. Priestley rose, with some emotion, and with sundry wavings of his hands, to propose the health of a gentleman whose name he was sure would be received with cordiality, even by those who did not agree with him in religious opinions. Bentley felt an unpleasant sensation in the palms of his hands and feet, and began playing with the tea-spoon in the saucer.

"He," Mr. Priestley, "had always found Mr. Bentley, his respected friend," (several of the poorer classes, whom Bentley had often assisted, here joined with the chairman in endeavouring to raise a loud applause, but it did not succeed,) "he had always found his respected friend, and he might say, he hoped without offence, his brother minister, most anxious to cooperate with him in all matters affecting the common welfare of their flocks. He, Mr. Priestley, had his own opinion, and probably many who heard him had theirs, of the expediency of a state religion. But, as the laws of the land had decreed that one religious denomination should have the ascendancy over the rest, he trusted all would obey those laws so long as they continued to exist." Bentley felt uncomfortable.

"If, indeed," continued the speaker, "all churchmen were like Mr. Bentley, Christians would, indeed, be at peace. Nothing could exceed the liberality, the Christian liberality, of his sentiments; worthy a religion of which the first principle was peace on earth and goodwill to men;" and he concluded with proposing Mr. Bentley's health.

"How kind!" said an old woman to her next neighbour.—"Just as it should be," exclaimed a stout, honest-looking tradesman; "I like to see good feeling among the gown! Live and let live,

is my motto; and persecute no man for his opinions!" Bentley rose to return thanks; the kind-hearted, zealous, pious Bentley, who wanted nothing but instruction to understand and avoid the false position in which he felt himself placed, and who really was struggling (day and night) beyond his strength to spread what he deemed true religion among the thousands of Hawkstone, just as the Irish constable threatened with his solitary arm to surround the mob. That he said but little, and that little with an embarrassed air, and in a voice too low to be heard, might naturally be expected. And he sat down vexed with himself, and to the evident disappointment of some few and the triumph of many, with only a few encouraging "hear, hear," to cover his retreat.

"Quite a break down," whispered Mr. Mason, the Quaker, to Mr. Bryant, who was the great orator of the place, and had been assiduously writing notes on a scrap of paper for some time past; "quite a break down."

And certainly, through some cause or another, the Church does break down generally, when it attempts these rhetorical harangues. Popular eloquence is not its forte, and never has been, for what reasons we leave our readers to inquire; but Charles Bevan, if he had been asked, would have said, that man, in delivering a message from his Maker, has only to deliver it, and not to trouble himself with the results; to deliver it plainly, intelligibly, effectively, so that no excuse may remain for inattention, and that all the rest is in the hand of Heaven; and, therefore, popular preaching, and popular speaking, and appeals to the passions, and all the trickery of platform discussion and proprietary chapels, are out of place in members of a Church, and only do harm. Certainly, Bentley felt as if he wished such

were the case, and he might not be called on again to make speeches at the Temperance Society.

Not so Mr. Bryant. Another mysterious look was exchanged from the chairman, and the great orator of Hawkstone arose, and with a deep and portentous voice he poured forth, as the newspapers described it, "a flood of eloquence, which held his audience in rapt attention," and "electrified them with lightning bursts of feeling" for more than half an hour. In fact, the chief amusement of the meeting had depended on Mr. Bryant, and of this he was well aware, for the day had been fixed purposely for his convenience in attending. His exordium was like Mr. Bowler's, but more pathetically bespeaking indulgence for his defects and diffidence. From this he proceeded to describe (and his eyes opened and flashed as he advanced, and his arms began to move) "the grand and solemn scene which he then saw before him; so many intellectual beings congregated together under the wide vault of heaven (applause), without distinction of sect or party (applause again), to emancipate themselves and the whole earth from the great crime of drunkenness (reiterated cheers)." Mr. Bryant, in looking over his speech in the morning, had doubted about "the whole earth," but it told wonderfully well; and the inhabitants of Hawkstone felt each like an Atlas with a whole universe resting on his shoulders. He proceeded, says the newspaper from whom we borrow, to depicture in the most gratifying terms "the moral and intellectual condition of his hearers, free, enlightened, religious, liberal, without bigotry, without vice. It was a sight to rejoice the heart of Englishmen" (cheers again, though some of the older members refrained, as not liking to applaud themselves). From this he digressed to give a graphic sketch of the drunkard "rolling in the

gutter, which made the blood of his audience thrill with horror," and he pointed out the absolute importance of binding even children from their youth by a solemn vow to abstain from all spirituous liquors. "Impossible," he said, "to begin too early;" and Mr. Armstrong, the Baptist minister, nodded a most hearty assent. He then enlarged on the value and necessity of associating ourselves in every good cause; enumerated the hundred affiliated societies which had sprung from the central one in London; trusted that they should always act unanimously, and keep up a close and affectionate correspondence with the body from which they had derived the first blessing of a temperance committee. Without union, the very object of the society must be lost. Without the society, there could be no temperance. He would intreat them to stick heartily together, and mark any one who ungratefully or insidiously should sow the seeds of — (Mr. Bryant here paused for a moment, for the word "dissension" had risen to his lips; but, for some reason or another, he did not like it, and luckily had time to change it) — "should sow the seeds of disunion among them." — Loud cries of "We will, we will!" And here the newspaper reporter observes that some allusion was intended to a feeling of discontent which had spread among many of the members in regard to the conduct of the committee, and which Mr. Bryant was most anxious to prevent from breaking out into open schism. And he therefore proceeded to point out the solemn duty of not quarrelling with persons in authority, especially for minor points, lest the very object of the whole society should be defeated by such jealousies and animosities.

Having dwelt for some time on this delicate topic, he passed, to use the language of the news-

paper, "with singular felicity" to the "picturesque and romantic ruins within which they were that day assembled." "He trusted, indeed he felt assured," (and here he gazed round with a scrutinising eye,) "it was impossible, indeed, that any papist should have intruded into their truly protestant assembly."—"No, no," cried the party.—"He gladly accepted their answer. And yet if the Pope himself had been present, drinking tea with them, he, Mr. Bryant, would have boldly stood his ground, and dared him to defend his bloody and atrocious system." As this was uttered with the greatest vehemence, and Mr. Bryant's clenched fist descended on the table at its close with more than an ordinary thump, it was followed by a round of applause. And certainly he was right in supposing that few true Roman Catholics would have made their appearance in such a heterogeneous congregation. And then the speaker burst forth into the most imposing portion of his harangue. "He compared the deeds of darkness which had formerly been perpetrated within these walls," (how and when, he would have been puzzled to say, for the simple reason that he had never heard,) "and the innocent, the sublime recreation of drinking tea under their ruins, with tea-tables spread in the chapel, and kettles boiling where the altar had stood. He spoke of the enormities of monasteries, of vows by which men bound themselves without any authority from the Bible; of absurd abstinences and fastings from good things which God had created to be enjoyed in moderation; of silly idle mummeries, and men and women dressed up to distinguish themselves from their fellow-creatures."—(And here, in the ardour of his gesticulation, he nearly knocked off from the breast of his next neighbour an immense blue rosette, with which all the members had de-

corated themselves, and especially the gentlemen stewards, the bearers of white wands.) He showed, and with the greatest truth, how a number of men or women congregated together without the superintendence of their spiritual superiors, and, following only their own will and fancy, must fall into mischief, as monks and nuns had done : and from thence he traced the corruptions introduced by them into the pure Gospel of Christ, with which every one had mixed their own notions and mere human speculations, instead of adhering simply to the truth as it was taught by God. Nothing could be more successful than his demonstration, and admirably was it received ; for Mr. Bryant was a clever man, and not an ineloquent man, and a religious man, and had studied parts of the Romish system with no little insight into its faults, whatever he might have learnt of its virtues. One point, indeed, he omitted : he had intended to speak of the absurd religious processions and pilgrimages in which Roman Catholics indulge, with music, and singing, and other vain solemnities ; but the chairman, as it was getting late, was obliged to remind him that they had not yet sung the hymn, and that the band was becoming impatient.

The hymn therefore was sung, all standing ; and, as it was one of Watts's, which Mr. Priestley had previously eviscerated of all peculiar doctrines, it gratified all parties, and offended none. And the members were just about to rise from the tables, when a fresh arrival was announced which caused considerable sensation. Several of the stewards jumped up to receive the stranger ; several others looked round for a seat. The bottom of the table fell wholly into commotion, what with curiosity, and what with a wish to do honour to the new comer. Mr. Bryant himself and Mr. Priestley ad-

vanced hastily to the outer gate of the priory, and proceeded to introduce into the chapel, and to present first to Mr. Bowler the chairman, and then to the gentlemen of the committee,—whom, gentle reader, whom do you suppose? Was it the tall dark stranger, who had left the chapel just before the society came into it? No! it was a young, thin, pert-looking, beardless man; not ungentlemanly in his dress or manner, had it not been for a contemptuous turn about the nose and lips, and a cold sneering expression of the eye. But the contempt and the sneer were now meant to be subdued into the most urbane and courteous demeanour; and the cordiality with which he shook hands with Mr. Bryant, and the ease of his deportment to the chairman, and the perfect confidence and self-command with which he surveyed the long tea-tables, and then turned up his glass to look at the mullions of the windows, completely won the hearts of the tea party.

“A very fine young man!” whispered Mrs. Hutchings, the butcher’s wife, to Miss Spence, who sat by her side; “a very fine young man, indeed! and, they say, so clever. I even heard he has written a book.”

“Indeed!” said Miss Spence. “I hope he will make a speech.”

And, to the great delight of Miss Spence, she observed a little bustle and whispering at the top of the table, and a short confabulation between Mr. Priestley and the chairman, which was followed by Mr. Priestley rising from his seat, amid a clatter of spoons, to call attention, and craving the chairman’s permission to propose a toast. He prefaced it by some pertinent observations about “unexpected honour,” “duty of hospitality,” “distinguished talents,” “illustrious representative,” and closed with

announcing the health of Mr. Marmaduke Brook. The cheering was not very enthusiastic, for few persons knew any thing of Mr. Brook, except that he had offered himself as a candidate for the borough of Hawkstone at the next election, and on the Radical interest. But Mr. Marmaduke received it, such as it was, with considerable nonchalance, and stood with his glass to his eye, and beating his boot with his whip, until it had subsided. He then advanced at once to the table, and, bowing round to the chairman, commenced his speech.

He thanked them cordially "from the bottom of his heart." (Where Mr. Brook's heart was, it would have puzzled a moral anatomist to discover; but, then, persons who are poor must always talk most of their riches.) "They had conferred on him an honour, such as he had never received before—such as he should carry engraved on his heart" (heart again!) "to the last day of his life. Stranger as he was, coming among them thus unexpectedly, by the merest accident, as he was taking his ride"—(Mr. Bryant bit his lips to prevent a smile, for the whole plan had been concerted that morning at Mrs. Maddox's cabinet council, and all had agreed that no better opportunity could occur of presenting the Radical member to his hoped-for constituents than the Temperance tea-drinking among the ruins of the Priory)—"how gratifying, how inspiring, it must be to him to be welcomed by such a distinguished, and enlightened, and splendid assemblage with such hospitality, such urbanity, such"—(Here, unhappily, Mr. Brook had forgotten the last word of his triplet, and was compelled to cover the blank with a cough, which the hearers, who seldom heard such triplets, drowned in loud applause.) "He saw among them, and he rejoiced to see, some of those learned, and pious, and liberal-minded men,

whom, since his coming into Hawkstone, it had been his good fortune to meet, and to obtain from them their promise of support in his approaching canvass." (Cheers from the little group of dissenting ministers, Mr. Bentley remaining silent; and one or two faint cries of "Brook for ever!" from the bottom of the table, but as they were not taken up, the perpetrators of them slunk back in their seats as if abashed.) "Such men were an honour to their country, and he did from his heart" (heart again!) "rejoice to see them sitting here side by side, sinking all speculative differences, abjuring all empty dogmas, confining themselves to the great truths of benevolence and charity (hear! hear!), and pledging themselves and those around them to the grand, the magnificent maxim, that religion was a thing between man and his God; and that every man had a right to worship his Maker according to the dictates of his conscience. Am I right," continued the speaker, elevating his voice, "am I right, my enlightened countrymen, in declaring that you, like myself, are pledged to this heaven-descended truth?" (Two-syllabled epithets have always great effect on a popular ear, and accordingly the remainder of the sentence was lost in an uproar of applause, and cries of "Yes! yes!" in which nothing more could be heard from Mr. Brook, but something about "nailing colours to a mast.") "The days of bigotry," he proceeded, amidst cries of "hush! hush!" from the most influential of his supporters, "the days of bigotry are gone. No more should a tyrannical despot trample on the birthright of man. The very spot in which we are assembled, this roofless pile, these yawning ruins, these ——" (here again a cough in the defect of a third synonyme) "speak to us with a voice which should penetrate into every heart, that superstition and persecution are at an end.

(Cheers.) The moment the light of reason had arisen, like a sun above the horizon, carrying in its orb brightness, and brilliancy, and splendour, and illumination, and lustre, and light," (at this climax the uproar became immense,) "it had burst with a lightning torrent on these dens of superstition, had torn open their inmost cells," (intense, thrilling interest, and deep silence,) "had shattered these fabrics of superstition, had overturned these abodes of bigotry, had crushed those bloody altars, had"—Here the speaker became choked either with emotion or with having nothing more to say, and the audience, though rather disappointed of the end of the sentence, announced their sympathy by loud rappings. And as no one knew that these were only figurative expressions, by which Mr. Marmaduke Brook intended to say that Henry VIII. had driven out a number of poor old religious men to starve in the roads, had pulled down their houses, turned their chapel into a cow-house, and put their money into his own pocket, the sensation caused by such a gorgeous description was perfectly unparalleled. Happy it was that no old monk made his appearance at that moment, for in their horror of persecution for religious opinions they would infallibly have torn him to pieces.

Mr. Marmaduke having now recovered his speech, proceeded to inform his hearers that on such an occasion he should not think it proper to touch upon politics; and accordingly he proceeded to give them an outline of his political opinions. He professed himself a thorough reformer—a reformer of all abuses, but without violence, without revolution. "He trusted to the good sense, to the prudence of Englishmen, to work an entire change in the present corrupt system of government, without moving an arm—by changing the laws," he said, "not by dis-

obeying them. So long as the laws exist they ought to be obeyed; but every nerve should be strained to procure a change, as soon as possible, by constitutional means — by moral force — by passive resistance; — petitions, meetings, agitation — all were laudable — all were necessary — to regenerate the mass of society: only abstain from violence. He pointed out the enormous revenue now enjoyed by an hereditary monarch and an hereditary peerage, and contrasted them with the starving condition of the manufacturing population — the very population on which” (and here the factory men were loud in approbation) “the whole wealth and welfare of the community depended. They were the sinews of the country; they were its only hope — enlightened, cultivated, intelligent! How comes it,” said the energetic speaker, “that this important class is degraded into the melancholy condition of pauperism and demoralisation in which we now behold it?” (Here Mr. Bryant, who three days before had administered to the Mechanics’ Institution an abridgment of Watts’ Logic in the form of a lecture, could not help coughing. Something irritated his throat; and the cough had the effect of diverting attention from the little paralogism with which the speaker, without perceiving it till too late, had brought himself too closely into contact.) “He would say a few words upon the corn laws. (Cheers.) It was the corn laws, it was dear bread, which had worked this frightful effect.” (Here some one jogged his arm, and on casting his eye on a bit of paper slipped before him, he read “Bowler — a landlord,” and upon this with great adroitness he changed his tone.) “He was not for destroying the agriculturist. No! he was for giving him his due; securing him a fair remuneration. But until something was done to enable the manufacturer, now ruined by competition with

foreigners, to carry on that competition more fully, —to give higher wages to his workmen”—— Here a coarse vulgar voice from the bottom cried out, “They’ll never give us higher wages than they can help!” and Mr. Marmaduke, turning to the quarter from which the voice issued, asked urbanely, “What did his excellent friend suggest? He entirely agreed with him. He went with him fully in his observation; but he might be permitted to say (*i. e.* as Mr. Smith, the proprietor of the factories, was not present),—he might be permitted to say, that the workmen had in their own hands the power of increasing their wages: they might use all lawful combination—lawful combination, he repeated, to obtain their demand. They might assemble and go before their masters, and exhibit a moral force, which would extort the admiration of the world (loud applause), and at the same time raise their wages.” “Allow me to detain you for one minute with a few facts” (and the speaker searched in a copious pocket-book for some papers and memoranda), “only a few statistical facts, showing how you, gentlemen, would be benefited, and the agriculturists as much, by destroying the present taxes on your bread. Facts are the only argument.”

And then, with a great display of cool calculation and accuracy, he proceeded to read them from a paper a long list of figures and prices:—Wheat per bushel, so much; duty, so much; wages, so much; cotton, so much; brandy, so much; which astounded the hearers by the business-like learning it displayed, and enveloped the whole subject in a mist of multiplication and subtraction.—“A sound man!” whispered Mr. Bryant.—“No theorist,” said Mr. Priestley.—“A good practical man of business—understands figures,” subjoined one of Mr. Lomax’s clerks; and the effect was very favourable.

“But I have detained you, gentlemen, too long”——(“No! no!” from the whole body.) “I should have said ‘ladies and gentlemen,’” continued the speaker, as if recollecting himself, and dexterously resolving to relieve the dry statistics by an allusion to the bright eyes and matchless beauty with which he was surrounded. “How could I forget,” he continued, with a self-reproachful tone, “those brilliant forms, the fairest portion of creation, who are foremost in all good causes, and whom I rejoice to see, on this most interesting occasion, enjoying this innocent delicious beverage,” and he took up a tea cup.—“What’s beverage?” asked deaf Mrs. Lloyd of her clever son from the National School. “Something to drink, to be sure!” said the pert boy, who had been spelling the word that morning, and he looked sneeringly at his mother.—“What a fine thing it is to go to school!” thought Mrs. Lloyd, and she eyed her boy with admiration; till her attention was called back to Mr. Marmaduke Brook, and, with her hand turned up to her ear, she succeeded in catching the most prominent portions of his succeeding sentence,—“eyes raining bright influence”—“heaven-beaming innocence”—“fairy forms”—“flowers of creation,” and sundry other appropriate phrases which Mr. Brook had by him at all times, kneaded up in a ready-made sentence, and used on all occasions, when it fell to his lot to propose the health of the ladies. Magical was the effect produced by it on the ladies of the Temperance Society, who had never heard it before. They blushed, they simpered, they looked down, and the sensation took a palpable form on the same evening, by a resolution of the chief personages to raise a subscription of sixpence a-head, and purchase a large silk banner of the palest blue, with “Reform and Liberty” worked on it by their own fair

hands, to be presented to Mr. Brook himself at the ensuing election.

“And now,” proceeded Mr. Brook, “I will add but one word more: but it is on a subject of the most overwhelming importance. I am, gentlemen, a decided advocate for the Ballot. (Uproarious applause.) I am an advocate, gentlemen, for ensuring to every Englishman the right of voting according to his conscience. (Hear! hear!) But how you can vote according to your conscience, if your vote is to be known, I cannot discover! What can be more atrocious, more tyrannical, than for a landlord to say to his tenant, or a master to his workman, ‘You know little of politics, vote as I wish—abandon your liberty of thinking’? What can be more derogatory to the dignity of a free and reasoning being, amidst the light of the nineteenth century, than to be told that he is incapable of judging on the affairs of government,—that he cannot be trusted with the management of his country—that some tyrant of a landlord”——Here again a friendly jog reminded Mr. Brook of the agriculturist chairman: but as Mr. Brook turned round ready to pay a flaming compliment to Mr. Bowler, as the only intelligent benevolent landlord whom he had ever met with, that gentleman, he saw, was fast asleep; and, indeed, his being awake would have mattered little, since he had long since abandoned all trouble about politics, and made a point of giving his vote to the first man who asked him.

The sight, however, of Mr. Brook’s slumber reminded the speaker that his speech should draw to a close; and so to a close he drew it, with the usual protestations of ineffaceable gratitude for the honour they had done him,—with the most profound deference on all points whatever to their wishes and opinions, as the guide of his life,—and, if he might be

allowed to propose a toast, with "the health of those pious and excellent gentlemen to whom their spiritual welfare was committed, for whom he entertained the highest respect, and trusted they would always exert their influence in spreading knowledge, and order, and peace, and charity throughout the whole of this favoured land."

And here, amidst enthusiastic cheers, Mr. Marmaduke bowed to the assembly, and shook hands with the chairman, who had woke up just in time, and was rubbing his eyes, and with Mr. Bryant, and Mr. Priestley, and the Baptist minister, and the Independent minister, and, escorted by them, amidst the wavings of handkerchiefs and hats, and cries of "Brook for ever!" he left the ruins.

Two horses were at the gate : himself and young Mr. Thomas Maddox, who had not appeared before, lest suspicions of a designed visit should be roused, mounted together. Hands were again shaken, and hats taken off; and as soon as they had turned the corner, Mr. Marmaduke Brook burst into a loud laugh, in which Mr. Thomas Maddox most humbly and deferentially joined; not a little proud to think that he had been seen on horseback in company with a would-be member of parliament.

CHAP. VII.

IN the mean time Bentley had slipped away, soon after Mr. Marmaduke Brook's appearance, and was walking home alone through the park, uncomfortable and dissatisfied with himself. He had heard things which he did not like, though why, he could scarcely explain, and had done things which he felt to be wrong, though no one was likely to reproach him with them. And yet what could be better than his motives? There was a population under his care ignorant and turbulent, and amongst whom habits of intoxication, encouraged by the prevalence of distress and by the gambling spirit of manufacturing employment, were rapidly spreading. One after another pothouse after pothouse in the streets of Hawkstone had been converted into splendid buildings with pillars, and carvings, and illuminated interiors, and pawnbrokers' shops opposite, to supply means for the pale, haggard beings who all day long dropped in to spend their last pence in purchasing a temporary forgetfulness from hunger and misery. And without some efforts made to check this fountain of evil there was no hope for Hawkstone. Why not take advantage of an engine which had done so much good in America, and was converting even Ireland, by hundreds at a time, to sobriety and decency? What was the harm of men binding themselves by an open resolution to do that which was evidently right, and binding themselves all together without regard to religious distinctions in a matter where religious opinions clearly could not alter the

duty? Bentley was perplexed for the solution, and yet could not make up his mind that Temperance Societies were the good thing which he had once fondly believed. It did not occur to him, and no wonder, since no one had taught him, that by God himself, long prior to the nineteenth century there had been founded a Temperance Society, with its initiatory vow, its appointed officers, its festive meetings, its solemn sanctions; moreover with an especial promise of aid and blessing from Heaven; and that Bentley himself had been created an officer to govern this old society, and not to supersede and destroy it by any new association of his own, or of human invention: it never occurred to Bentley that such a society was the Church. Of the Church as an associated organised body politic he had entirely lost sight; just as if a subject living in the British empire, perhaps a magistrate charged with the administration of its laws, were to forget some day by any strange hallucination that he had already a Sovereign, and a Parliament, and statute laws, and tribunals of justice binding him to execute his office, and were then to frame or fall under some new invented constitution and governor set up by a popular enthusiast, — continuing all the time to sit on the bench and administer justice in the name of the old establishment. Strange contradictions and painful perplexities would assuredly arise in such a conflict of relations: but not more strange or more painful than those to which Bentley had been exposed, when as a minister of the Church he had attempted to fulfil an end of the Church by means not appointed by the Church, and in conjunction with men who were in open rebellion against it.

And why was Bentley not alive to such simple truths? Because, as we said before, no one had

taught him. He had been brought up as a boy under parents of lax principles, who never spoke to him of religion: from them he had been transplanted to a school, where, with the exception of a dull sermon on the Sunday,—a sermon on morality only,—and a chapter in the Greek Testament on Monday, in which nothing was thought of but the syntax, religion again was as if it did not exist; and all vice was allowed to flourish, without effort to correct it, if it only had cunning to escape the eye of a master who did not wish to see. From school he went to Cambridge. And here the first germs of his religious feelings began to develop themselves. He was thrown (by accident) among a set of clever, cool-headed, profligate young men, who formed themselves into a sort of club, of which the motto, if the spirit had been expressed, would have been a dilemma between Atheism and Pantheism. He was caught by their sparkling vivacity, overawed by their sarcastic pretensions, involved with them in a rivalry of mere intellectual power, in which he was encouraged by the hope of obtaining a fellowship, for which nothing but intellectual power was required. And the very studies of the place, engaging him almost solely in mathematical speculations, fostered in him a dry, critical, cold-hearted, sceptical tone of mind, which was prevented from hardening into avowed infidelity solely by the natural warmth of an affectionate disposition, and the blessing of Providence. The very circumstances of a place of education, in which, as at that time was the case unhappily in both universities, the externals of religion had degenerated into empty forms, and yet were still strictly maintained as instruments of College discipline, necessarily engendered doubt as to the sincerity of its professors, and the reality of its system. He saw the chapel service enforced strictly on the

pupils, and neglected by the tutors — attendance on it selected as a fit punishment for trivial offences, and a refusal to receive the Holy Communion visited as a sufficient penalty by the most trifling fine. He found himself within the walls of the chapel kneeling side by side with an avowed Socinian, a professed Jew, and an hereditary Roman Catholic. And yet the authorities of the College, without hoping or attempting a conversion, were satisfied with exacting from them all an external act of worship, which to any sincere believer, either in Socinianism, or Judaism, or Popery, must have been revolting and impious. He attended lectures on divinity, but instead of the positive truth of the Gospel, they turned on grammatical disquisitions, or evidences of Christianity — evidences, which, if belief had been strong in the Church, would scarcely have been deemed necessary to be taught. Of ecclesiastical history, of religion either as embodied in a social system, or as a vital habit of the heart, he heard nothing. Church livings and Church patronage were the only forms under which the Church appeared : and its political connexion with a mere Tory party, who upheld it as an instrument of government, rendered it peculiarly obnoxious to the contempt of a liberal Whig ; and by liberal Whigs he was surrounded. At this stage in the formation of his character, when he had already done much of which, at a later date, he bitterly repented, and was on the eve of doing worse, it pleased Providence to throw in his way one of those many biographies, with which a peculiar school of Divinity has endeavoured to supply the place of the *Acta Sanctorum*, or *Lives of the Saints*, of Romanism. It was taken up first in mere idleness : but it happened, or rather it was ordained, that it should rouse a train of serious reflection ; and Bentley became an altered

man. A new world seemed opened to him,—a world of feeling and passion, to which the dry, cold associations of his past life gave new zest. The book which first touched his heart was read again and again with avidity. Others were procured of the same stamp. Hymns, sermons, devotional exercises, preachers, doctrines, all formed on the same model, were at Cambridge within reach, until he had worked himself into a fever of religious excitement, in which remorse and triumph, despair and confidence, love and fear, alternated in strange confusion, and his imagination was filled with a wild phantasmagoria, obscuring all the plain duties and sober realities of life. By degrees this passed away. But still excitement of feeling was the predominant element in his religion. He entered into holy orders with a fervent zeal to redeem, if possible, his past life by an entire devotion to his duty. But of this duty itself he had never formed a clear and definite notion. And notwithstanding his horror of Popery as a religion of forms superseding the vital doctrines of the Gospel by the craft of a priesthood, he fell at the very first outset of his ministry into precisely the same error which led to the corruptions of Popery—that of making the object of his ministry to be the salvation of men, instead of the plain, straightforward, uncompromising enunciation of the message committed to his charge. His first thought was man, as if the glory of God depended on man's obedience. And thus he laboured for his flock with an energy exhausting his own strength and often defeating its purpose. Night and day, morning and evening, Bentley's thoughts and actions were engaged in devising and executing plans for winning souls to God. Sermons,—lectures,—visits,—exhortations,—some new association,—a prayer meeting,—attractive music in the church, allurements

for charity,—besides innumerable parochial designs for ameliorating the condition of the poor, in penny clubs, and blanket clubs, and benefit clubs—and then the schools, week-days and Sundays,—the gaol,—the workhouse,—all these suggested themselves and pressed on him with an anxiety which allowed him no moment of respite for quiet contemplation or scarcely for prayer. Measuring the rectitude of his exertions by their success, and seeing them constantly fail, he was constantly miserable. Every new scheme was seized as gladly as if no schemes had been already provided by the Church whose minister he was. A character of bustle, and vacillation, and excitement, pervaded all his undertakings. His best efforts to do good were generally out of place. He was constantly exhorting—constantly debating; bringing religion before men at all times, seasonable or unseasonable, with no rule to guide him but his own conscience; and his conscience could never be at rest.

His very phraseology acquired an affected, technical character which destroyed its force. It was violent without warmth, and strained without power. And singular to say, as he began, so he proceeded; and with all his dread of Popery, which he never ceased to denounce in the strongest and often in improper language, he gradually adopted all the worst principles of Popery, and brought them into action. Like Popery, he endeavoured to bring men to religion by appeals to the fancy, the feelings, the reason, instead of plainly and simply setting before them the truths of God, and leaving them in the hands of God to work their fruit. Like Popery, he learned to look with contempt on the Catholic constitution of the Church, and, if not to despise bishops, at least to depreciate their authority. Like Popery, he formed his own standard of opinion, and fixed his

own centre of obedience, instead of submitting to the standard and the centre fixed by God in the Catholic Church. Like Popery, he had his saints and his fathers, recent indeed, and selected by himself, and canonised by himself on account of their agreement with his own opinions, to whom he deferred implicitly as individual men, while he stigmatised as criminal any reverence for the Fathers of Primitive Christianity. Like Popery, he shut up the Bible from the comprehension of the people. The book, indeed, he distributed abundantly, but as he threw each reader on his own powers of interpretation, and cut off from them the sound comments and typical illustrations of Christian antiquity, he might as well have given it to them in the Arabic text; for what uneducated man could find out the one true doctrine in the variety of possible interpretations, and who could take an interest in a work, which he could not understand without assistance, and in which assistance was denied him? Like Popery, he encouraged the growth of a multitude of voluntary self-organised bodies, emancipated from episcopal control, and which were intended to perform the various functions of the Church, but by a different machinery; just as if a man to whom nature had given legs should insist upon walking upon stilts. Monastic, indeed, they were not: Bentley would have shuddered at the word. But perhaps they had all the evils of monasticism without any of the good, as we may see hereafter. Like Popery again, Bentley preached loudly the doctrine of justification by faith, and practically inculcated justification by works; for he threw men on their own internal emotions, tested their goodness by their feelings, which after all are only works of another kind from alms, fastings, and mortification of the body, but without the advantage of pro-

ducing like them external good. They produced no good at all. Like Popery, Bentley indulged in forms, and laid on them the greatest stress—forms of speech, forms of intonation of voice, forms of society, abstinence from certain amusements, associations with certain persons, the reading of certain books. Unhappily they were forms of his own creation, or adopted from his party; not the forms of the Catholic Church. Like Popery, at the Council of Trent, Bentley tampered with the Catholic apostolical creed—added to it—omitted from it—fixed his own limits as to what was essential and what non-essential—and denounced an anathema on all who did not subscribe to his peculiar views. Like Popery, Bentley tampered with the sacraments. If monasticism introduced a second baptism, a second vow of obedience, a second commencement of a new life, which invalidated the former, Bentley had his notions of conversion, which went precisely to the same point. If Popery, in order to satisfy a curious reason, explained the mystery of the Holy Communion by the irreverent theory of transubstantiation, Bentley had his theory likewise, constructed for the same purpose, but equally destroying the nature of a sacrament, by denying the inward grace of it, as Popery denied the outward sign. Bentley had also his confessional: not a private confidential chair, in which he might guide the consciences of his flock, but open confessionals, where he encouraged every one in the presence of every one to recount their spiritual experiences and throw open to the common gaze that sanctuary of the heart which God has so carefully hidden beneath the veil of diffidence and shame. And this confessional he endeavoured to extend, by putting up a box in his church to receive communications from his flock, without the pain or difficulty of personal

intercourse. Unhappily, this plan he was obliged to abandon, for just as monks and friars are charged with leading away silly women, so Bentley found his box filled with communications from ladies, who, as any one might naturally expect who knew his real goodness of heart, his talents, and his piety, looked on him with something more than the reverence due to their pastor.

In short, not to multiply instances, or to enter into the abstruser points of resemblance, Bentley had by degrees become a Papist in every thing but in name, and, what was more important, without the power which enabled Popery to wield so long the spiritual destinies of the world. He had no association to fall back upon; no organized system; no arm of terror; no mysterious foreign authority to speak to his flock from behind a veil; no antiquity; no pretension to learning; no deep knowledge of human nature; no secular force; no wealth: and the consequence which was necessary followed,—his flock melted away under his eye. A few he retained almost against their will, for they did not coincide with his notions. Others attached themselves to him enthusiastically for a time, and then dropped off, as soon as Mr. Bryant had appeared in a new chapel, and with new eloquence. The poor he could not hold; for all that he told them they required, they found in a more palatable and intelligible shape in the dissenting chapel. And for the better classes he had nothing to animate activity, to regulate feeling, to enforce self-denial, to satisfy a doubting reason, to answer that craving which, in an age of scepticism and dissension, yearns for some permanent authority, some bond of union, to quiet the distraction of the mind. He never placed before them *law—stern, inflexible, external law—a law over reason as well as over will—a law of God,*

definite and immutable, intrusted to the custody of an incorporated society, and through the hands of that society to be held up before the eyes and grafted on the heart of man. And without such a law, what becomes of man's intellect, or his passions, or his activity, or his happiness? He spoke to them of reason, of conscience, of feeling, of utility; but when his hearers asked themselves whose reason, whose conscience, whose feeling, whose sense of utility, was to be their guide, each man found it was his own: and those who were satisfied with their own gladly followed his premises to their legitimate conclusion of self-indulgence in all things; and those who were not, looked about them weariedly and anxiously for some ark of rest, — and an ark of rest, of false and treacherous rest, they were about to have.

As Bentley seated himself on the point where the stranger had turned aside in the morning to replace the broken bench, and gazed down sadly and bodingly on the town in the valley beneath, he fixed his eyes on some white glittering pinnacles just rising unfinished above the smoke, and recognised the great object of his alarm, the new Roman Catholic chapel, for which Lord Morden, the Whig minister, had given the ground, and the Earl of Claremont had subscribed a very large sum; the rest being supplied from some mysterious fund, of which no one could give an account, but which, from the splendour of the building, and the number of others of the same kind which were rising throughout the country, appeared almost inexhaustible.

The thoughts which passed through Bentley's mind, as he gazed on this hateful object, were most bitter. His ministry had failed; and he had sought for the credentials of his ministry, not in a formal appointment from the appointed rulers of the

Church, but in the success of his labours. He had found the town effete, indeed, and paralysed by the long incapacity of its old rector to attend to their spiritual wants; with little but a formal religion, and those forms dwindled into shadows. He had thought to revive the spirit of religion without them, —to make men hearty zealous Christians, so as to need no support from mere external ordinances, —just as if, when a sick man has fainted, and the circulation stopped in his limbs, we should proceed to restore the circulation, and at the same time to cut off the limbs. And now all had failed; and the church, lying as it did, on his first coming, in a state of suspended animation, had been apparently killed, and prevented from coming to life again by his zeal and energy, which had cut off the channels through which the life-stream was to flow.

Bentley did not see all this; but he did see that something was wrong; and he sighed most heavily. And as he looked down on the dull red mass of vapour that hung over the town, through which the setting sun was now shooting its diverging rays, other thoughts than of his spiritual duties rose in his mind. There were, indeed, thousands of souls in that large place, for which, in some shape, he, and he alone, was responsible; and he felt bitterly that the account he must render of them was full of evil. But there were also thousands of bodies, thousands of living beings, of whom all but a small proportion were in poverty and misery; —mothers, with the hearts of mothers, who were hanging over starving children; fathers, with arms of strength, and hearts almost desperate with disappointment and suffering. There were hundreds and hundreds of children who were toiling day and night without hope, without relief, like drudges in a mill, forced from their beds in the cold grey mornings before

they had slept out their melancholy weariness, sent back to their beds again to think with fear of the coming day; many worn with midnight toil, snatching their hasty meal of dry bread or cold potatoes, apart from their parents, under the eye of a stern task-master, and in the midst of grinding wheels and tainted air,—oh! how unlike that beautiful, that merciful nature, on which Bentley himself was gazing,—the hills—the woods—the green meadows—the sparkling waters—the bright blue sky—the glorious sun,—all which God has made for man, but especially for man in his childhood, as the nursery in which he might be reared under fair sights, and gentle sounds, and softest colours, and a liberty of innocence, to see his Maker around and above him at every step, in every thrill of pleasure, though shrouded under a mystery of grandeur and of beauty.

And they were left to themselves. Some hand, Bentley knew not how, had severed those unhappy beings from the ranks above them. He did, indeed, visit, and visit daily, their miserable abodes, and came back choked with tears, to sit down to his solitary meal, which he could scarcely provide for himself, and which was often sent away untasted to relieve some famishing family. But what could one hand, a hand of poverty like their own, or one voice, or one mind, do with such a mass of ignorance and distress? When he stood among them, and spoke of religion, they gazed on him with a stupid indifference, as if asking what right an individual, young and solitary like him, could have to command their minds. If he gave them relief, it was snatched without gratitude; for there was nothing about him to fear, and therefore little to excite love. In vain he exhorted the few unoccupied persons, principally ladies, who could undertake the task, to visit and

assist in relieving. They did assist him as they could; but they had neither authority, nor power, often not judgment sufficient, to turn those visits to account, in forming habits of obedience, or religion, or even prudence. The population was a body without a head, — a mass of fermenting passions, sufferings, high stimulated desires, half-instructed reason, — with no power above them to control, to guide, to be the object of affection, to sympathize with them, or to awe them. And not long since they had been admitted to the right of voting for members of parliament — to a share in the supreme government of the country. And as Bentley recalled these things, and gazed on the sun sinking behind a hill, and thought of a declining empire, he started up suddenly from his seat — for he had lost his watch.

CHAP. VIII.

UNHAPPILY for the unity of our story, our three principal personages at this moment have diverged, each in different directions, without knowing or caring at all for each other's movements. And the reader, who must hold in his hands the several clues to their proceedings without confusing them, will, we fear, be not a little puzzled. The stranger has left the ruins, and wandered into the park; Bentley, while sitting on the bench, and ruminating on the state of his parish, has just discovered the loss of his watch; and Miss Mabel has been occupied the whole afternoon, and we must now return to her. She left Mrs. Bevan's a little ashamed, a little perplexed, and, perhaps, a little angry, with the lecture which she had received. But her official duties were all before her, and her spirits rose with the calls upon her exertions. The accounts, accordingly, of one society were settled, and the plan for the other arranged; and the meeting for the Irish attended; and Mabel had the satisfaction every where of finding herself employed as secretary, and consulted as oracle—for persons are always glad to find those who will take trouble off their hands, and never hesitate to consult those whom they are not obliged to follow. And, the work of the morning despatched, and an invitation being accepted to eat a family dinner at Mr. Morgan's at five o'clock, Mabel resolved to employ her afternoon in a visit of charity. She would go and see poor Mrs. Connell, and the burnt boy.

It was with some difficulty that she made her way under a dirty archway, and over a heap of rubbish, through the narrow, stifling, and offensive alley in which the poor family had taken refuge. Some tattered linen was hanging to dry across it; heaps of dung and offal lay before the doors; and a few pale miserable faces peered out of the broken casements, as Mabel's black silk cloak, carefully wrapped round her, was seen threading the low passage. Every one prepared at once their tale of sorrow or complaint. One had been neglected in the distribution of blankets; another's child had been whipped at the National School, and would not be sent any more unless the committee would scold the master; a third had found fault with the soup; a fourth was meditating how to extract from Mabel an order on the Benevolent Society for wine for her sick child, then lying in a high fever; and a fifth, a masculine, red-armed Amazon, had taken those arms from the washing-tub before her, and, hastily wiping them, came forward, with no pacific voice, to expostulate with and denounce poor Mabel for having said something to Mr. Bentley in dispraise of her drunken husband. One face only, a fair, soft, delicate face, still bearing traces of great beauty, but worn with care and sorrow, shrunk back, as if trembling and ashamed, the moment Mabel appeared, and hastily withdrew up the stairs of one of the most miserable of the hovels. Mabel herself had caught her eye, and started, for it was poor Margaret, who had been her pride and delight at the National School, whom she had petted and brought forward on every occasion, employing her as scribe and monitor, and in a variety of other trustworthy offices, even dressing her in her own cast-off clothes, and turning, in fact, the poor girl's head, until, to Mabel's horror, a change was per-

ceived in her character and appearance: her quickness became levity; her eye, naturally lively and open, now shrunk from meeting Mabel's; and it soon became too evident that Margaret was lost. Mabel, indeed, did not abandon her: exertions were made by Mr. Bentley, and other influential persons, especially by Mr. Brown, who employed George Wheeler in his service; and it was some satisfaction to Mabel to think that all that could be done was done, and that George, who had caused her ruin, was compelled to marry her.

Whatever strictness Mabel was inclined to enforce in melancholy cases of this kind, she could not forget that something was to blame in herself; and the moment she caught sight of Margaret's humbled, penitent, anxious face of patient suffering, she resolved to do what she had not done before, and to visit her again. And she was rather pleased to find, when asking for Mrs. Connell, to hear that she and her husband and children had been offered a shelter by Margaret herself, and were now living under the same miserable roof. Making her way past a little knot of dirty ragged children, who were playing with a crab-shell, and, young as they were, intermixed their play with oaths and words which Mabel could not hear without shuddering, she ascended the ruinous staircase; and her authoritative knock at the door was answered by the bustling appearance of Mrs. Connell, her black ragged hair straggling from her torn cap, and many symptoms indicating that she had not passed a day of that total abstinence recommended by the Temperance Society.

The room, however, was neater than Mabel had usually found to be the case in similar alleys. The broken panes were partially covered with paper. There were one or two chairs with their full complement of legs; a little range of crockery orna-

mented one wall; a common print of a Scripture subject, which Mabel recognised as one of her own gifts to poor Margaret when at school, was pinned over the fire-place; and two large geraniums in the window gave something of an air of refreshment and comfort. It was with some little difficulty that Mabel made her way past the loquacious Mrs. Connell, full of her own distresses, and tales of complaint against her drunken husband, to the heap of straw covered with an old brown coat, which lay in the corner, and on which the boy who had been burnt in the fire was now stretched. He was asleep, and, just as Mabel came to the bed-side, a ray of light struggled through the dim casement, and fell on his face. It was exquisitely beautiful; the forehead open, the lips half closed and full of intelligence and sweetness, the hair clustered thick in natural ringlets, the ear delicately small, the nose finely formed; and, though childhood even amongst the poorest is still full of beauty, Mabel was struck at something of a higher character in the form before her. She stood looking on him for some minutes, with that delight and composure, not unmingled with melancholy thoughtfulness, with which a sleeping child, helpless, unconscious, peaceful, pure, and yet surrounded with so many dangers, is regarded by a feeling mind. And she did not turn away till the boy, disturbed by some noise, threw out his arms, opened his eyes, and, uttering an oath, and throwing from him a Bible which Margaret had placed by his side, once more composed himself to sleep. Mabel shuddered again, and would have remonstrated with his mother on permitting him to grow up in such habits, but she had left the room; and, on turning round to look for her, she observed Margaret herself, who had endeavoured to escape observation by withdrawing

behind a screen, on which a new-washed shirt was hanging to dry, and was affecting to busy herself with preparing something in a pipkin over the scanty fire.

As Mabel approached her, she turned round, and, almost sinking with shame, could not venture to lift up her eyes; and, at the few kind but sad words with which Mabel addressed her, she covered her face with her hands, and, sinking in a chair, burst into tears. With this sight all Mabel's severity vanished; she spoke to her once more as she had used to do; and as the sound of her voice recalled past days and happier times, poor Margaret's agony of weeping increased, and it was with some difficulty that Mabel composed her sufficiently to proceed in some inquiries respecting her husband. At the word "husband" all Margaret's distress was again aroused.

"Where was he?"

"He had gone to find work at the quarries in the forest."

"How was he going on?"

Margaret was silent.

"Was he kind to her?"

She faintly answered "Yes." But Mrs. Connell, who had entered the room again, looked as if she were very much disposed to say "No."

"Where was her infant?"

And here Margaret once more burst into a passion of tears. "George had taken it with him to a relation's."

"Why?"

"To get it taken care of."

"But why not leave it with its mother?"

"We were starving," said Margaret, "and he said it would be better off."

"Was he fond of the child?"

Margaret was silent, and Mrs. Connell could refrain no longer, and said, "No,"—that he was "a brute."

Margaret sprung from her chair, and put her hand before the woman's mouth. But it was too late; and, with all the feelings of an Irish mother, in whom no hardship and no distress can eradicate the love of her children, even of her foster-children, Mrs. Connell proceeded to enlarge on George's bad conduct both to his wife and his child; but to the child especially—he seemed to hate it. Mabel listened with great pain. She thought how often love which ends in crime turns into hatred, and how little hope there is of permanent peace and comfort in an union which remorse and shame must embitter, and how hard it is to restore what has once been broken by sin. But while Mrs. Connell, unchecked by the imploring eyes of Margaret, who yet could not deny her statements, was proceeding in the full flow of her eloquent indignation, another step, harsh and heavy, was heard ascending the creaking staircase, and a short rude knock at the door was followed, without waiting for an answer, by the entrance of another person.

"Is your husband here?" said a rude, stern voice to Mrs. Connell, which, as Mabel's dress appeared from behind the screen, was softened down into something of bland hypocritical gentleness; "is your husband here, my good woman?" And, on looking up, Mabel saw a middle-aged stout man, with a hard iron face, rough whiskers, and bushy hair, a patch upon the mouth, the eyes small, and twinkling with deep lurking cunning, yet capable of concealing their expression, and his dress that of a butcher. But there was something about his whole appearance singular and almost unnatural, — a certain contrast between his dress and his

manner, which was felt rather than understood, and an evident desire to make observations upon others, without being able to face others himself. Mabel was struck equally by his change of tone and manner when he perceived who she was. He made way for her as she went up to the place where the poor boy lay, and his bow was that of a person capable of moving in a higher situation. And it appeared that he now thought it necessary to show some sympathy for the poor woman.

"How is he to-day?" he asked of Mrs. Connell; "is he better?"

And, as he came up to the bed-side, the boy opened his eyes, and a greeting took place between them as of an old and a young associate, familiar with each other, and of whom the elder had initiated the younger into much that was evil: and the look with which he gazed upon the boy did not escape Mabel. It passed over his countenance for a moment, lighting it up with a strange expression of exultation, and hate, and treachery, which made Mabel feel uncomfortable in his presence. But it was soon over; and he turned to repeat his question, "Where was Connell?"

Mrs. Connell herself seemed to stand before him in awe and fear. She faltered out, "that he was at the public-house."

"As usual," muttered the man. "As usual. And why do you let him go there?"

"How can I prevent it?" said the poor woman; "he takes all he can, and leaves me to get on as I can; and it is his only comfort. He does not sleep at night, and can't get work in the day; and no one cares for us; and, to tell the truth, Mr. Pearce," she said, gaining courage from despair, "it's bad days with us, and it were better we were back in our own country. Would to God we had never left it!"

"Pshaw! pshaw!" was the reply, and he was about to leave the room, when Margaret, trembling and faltering, came up to him, and asked if he had seen her husband.

"Where is George, Mr. Pearce?"

The man started and coloured, but only for an instant. "Up in the quarries, I suppose. How should I know?" he said; "am I to be answerable for all the stray husbands in the place?"

"But he told me," said Margaret, "that he was going to see you—that you were to get him employment."

"Did he?" answered the man; "then he told a lie, and you were a fool for believing him."

"And you have not seen him, then?"

"How should I have seen him, I tell you again!"

"And my baby," once more she faltered out,—
"you have not seen it?"

The man uttered a coarse expression of impatience, and, as Margaret burst into tears, he retreated hastily out of the room.

It was some little time before any one spoke after this scene. At last Mabel broke the silence by some observations on the sick boy, who lay with his fine face buried in a rough dirty heap of clothes, and apparently sulky and impatient at being made the subject of remark. It was in vain that Mabel addressed to him some of the usual commonplaces on the duty of bearing pain patiently; on its being a warning; on the necessity of profiting by it; on the opportunity which he now enjoyed of reading the Bible and saying his prayers. He either said nothing, or muttered some indistinct sounds, which told more of sulkiness than gratitude: and Mabel, as she withdrew, could not help lamenting to Mrs. Connell how little he seemed to have profited by sickness, and entreated her to remember the awful

responsibility of rearing up her children in the way they should go, and of the misery of seeing a son turn out ill. There was a strange passive indifference in Mrs. Connell's face as Mabel uttered the word "son," and a look of intelligence in poor Margaret's eye, which, however, did not intend to tell any tale. But Mabel observed them not; and, after leaving a trifle from the funds of a District Visiting Society, and promising to call again, she withdrew.

CHAP. IX.

As she turned the corner by the back gate of the little public-house called the Bricklayer's Arms, she once more caught sight of the strange man whom she had just met. But the repugnance which she had felt at his presence made her turn away her eyes. And she did not notice that, after looking up and down the street, to observe if any one saw him, and whistling at the same time with an affectation of indifference, he slipped quietly into the yard.

And we must follow him.

A nod of familiar recognition to a dirty, slipshod abigail, who performed the domestic offices of the public-house, and another to her equally dirty mistress, showed that he was no stranger in the place; and he entered without hesitation a little back room communicating with the tap, where, round a deal table covered with mugs of beer and tobacco-pipes, sat six or seven ill-looking ruffianly fellows, with rough caps on their heads, and dresses such as are worn by navigators, excavators, and persons employed on railroads. His entrance caused a movement among them. One or two took off their caps; others shuffled with their feet, as if prepared to rise; and all seemed awkward at first, as in the presence of a superior. But he nodded to them with a mixture of condescension and familiarity; and they were soon placed at their ease again by his taking up a dirty newspaper stained with beer, from which one of them had been reading, and asking what news. Before an answer could be given he had exchanged

a sign with one of them who sat at the head of the table, and seemed to possess some command over the rest, and to be better drest. And after a few words whispered between them, the other left the room.

"And so, sir, we are to have an election after all," said one of the remaining party.

"And what good will an election do you?" said a shrewd, cynical-looking man at the bottom of the table, who appeared to have had a somewhat better education than the rest.

"What good will parliament or any thing do us," rejoined another, "until we get the charter?"

"And what good will the charter do you?" said the cynic.

"Why, give us what we want, and put all things straight. Is it not a crying shame that with your representative government, as you call it, here are we, the thousands, ay, the millions, without any voice at all, or any one to represent us, or care for us, or give us any thing but a jail for a poor-house, and Botany Bay for a country residence? If we are to have representatives, let them be real ones — men who will do as we tell them, and only speak what we choose to hear."

"Fine governors we should make!" said the cynic.

"And pray why not?" was the reply. "Do not we know as much of government as the king's ministers themselves? cannot we find out what the people like, and do it just as well as they can, and better too? We'd soon make short work of it. Down with your civil list! down with your pensions! down with your corn-laws — and your landlords, grinding the poor to death that they may put their high rents into their pockets! Down with your poor-bastiles! down with your kings!" —

"And dukes, and princes, and marquises, and lords, and all the crew of them!" said another.

"Here's a health to them all, Mr. Pearce!" and he turned his glass upside down, and looked up significantly in the face of the last comer.

"And your taxes," rejoined Pearce himself, "and your tithes, and your church-rates, and your parliament clergy, your archbishops with 50,000*l.* a-year, and your bishops with 20,000*l.*, and your parsons, who, having plundered the Catholics, would now willingly burn and hang them, and send over an army to Ireland to extirpate what they call the bloody papists — do you say 'down' with these, too?"

"Ay, ay, down with them all!" rose at once in a chorus from the whole table; "down with them all — the sooner the better."

"And how will you down with them?" asked Pearce, winking, and looking at them with a cold sarcastic smile on his lips; "what is the use of your talking when men should be acting?"

"And we are going to act, are we not?" was the reply.

"Going!" said Pearce; "cowards are always going to act. What have you done to prepare yourselves when the time comes?"

"Something," said one of the youngest; and he threw a heavy stick upon the table, which Pearce took up and examined, feeling one end of it, and drawing out a short pointed weapon which fixed into it.

"Sharp — pretty sharp," he muttered, as he closed it up.

"Sharp enough," said its owner.

"And do you intend to use this?" said Pearce.

"Use it?" cried five or six voices at once, and the whole party opened their eyes as if in astonishment

at the question coming from such a quarter — “Use it? Why, what have you sent Blacker to us for, if we are not to use them?”

“*I* send Blacker to you!” said Pearce. “*I* wish you to use them! Who ever heard me say any thing of the kind? I recommend you all to claim your rights as Englishmen; and if they attempt to put you down by force, why, rather than have your necks straightened on the gallows, it might be as well to try something else. But my advice is, obey the law. Alter the law if you can, but do not break it; it only does harm. Show yourselves in a strong attitude; let your enemies and your persecutors see that you can defend yourselves. Moral force is invincible. This is what I recommend, and always shall. So Blacker will tell you: he is a fine fellow, and you cannot have a better leader.”

There was a curious mixture of blank surprise and disappointment in the faces of all assémbled, as Pearce uttered these words and turned whistling to the window.

“But I thought, Mr. Pearce,” said one of them, at length taking courage, “I thought Blacker had orders from you?”

“Orders from me!” fiercely cried Pearce as he turned round sharply on the speaker. “Orders from me, Blacker!” — as the man who seemed the leader of the gang re-entered the room — “Blacker! have you told these men that I have given you orders — that I have any thing to do with this?” and he took up the dagger stick.

“I?” said Blacker, stammering. “No, sir, never. No one ever heard me say any thing of the kind. I told them you were a friend to the people, and wished them to have their rights, and were no monopolist or aristocrat: that is all. If any one says more than this, it is quite a mistake.”

“Quite a mistake, quite a mistake,” hastily repeated Pearce. “Moral influence is what I recommend—peaceable pressure from without—force of opinion—imposing attitude;—show your strength—but do not violate the laws, do not violate the laws!”

He then whispered a word to Blacker—received a short answer, and, with a hurried good morning, he left the room.

“Now that is what I call courage!” said the cynic; and others seemed inclined to say the same.

But Blacker took his seat at the head of the table, and, making a sign for silence, soon drew their attention to other things. There were signs and countersigns exchanged, mysterious communications respecting Lodges and Brethren, and work to be done. Several produced weapons like the one exhibited before; and the aspect of fierce determination, with which they gradually regarded each other and their leader, brightened with satisfaction when Blacker pulled out a handful of sovereigns and proceeded to divide them.

“And now, Captain Blacker,” said the cynic, as he pocketed his money, “you are a great man, and a clever man among us poor ignorant fellows, who cannot read or write; but may such a stupid fellow as I am take the liberty of asking where all this comes from?”

“Come from?” replied Blacker, with a laugh. “Who minds where his money comes from, when he finds it snug in his own pocket? Do not trouble yourself about that.”

“Why, I do not trouble myself much about any thing,” said the cynic, chinking the money in his hand; “it is all the same to me, if I get my pot of beer and my warm fire-side, how the world goes

with other people. But that fellow Pearce, they say he has plenty of these," and he held up a sovereign to the light; "and you seem to be pretty good friends with him. Eh, captain?"

Blacker laughed again, but with a look which checked further inquiry, and contented himself with saying that the business was over and he must go. "One thing," he added, "you may be sure of, my lads. There are people cleverer and greater than I or Mr. Pearce, or any one in this place, who will be very glad to see you have your rights, and won't mind assisting you if you help yourselves. Only remember your business: mind your oath, keep your counsel, do not get drunk, stand by your brethren, and obey your captain. Is not this it?"

"Yes, yes,—we will, we will,"—and Blacker left them.

As he passed by a little room at the other end of the passage, the door was ajar, and he was beckoned into it by Pearce, who was standing to watch for him. The door was shut after him; and Pearce, drawing himself up to his full height, and planting himself with an air of determined and commanding authority within a few feet of him, sternly demanded what he meant by letting those fellows suppose there was any communication between them. Blacker, a man clever and self-possessed, but evidently under the control of Pearce, and awed by him as by a master, hesitated and coloured, and began to excuse himself and deny it.

"None of your excuses or denials," said Pearce; "you know who I am, and you know that I know every thing. Never tell *me* a lie!" and he fastened on him a look of penetrating and contemptuous significance which Blacker could not face.

"You have not told them any thing," said Pearce,

after a pause. "I know that well enough. But you have allowed them to suspect, and with us that is as bad. Remember your oath, sir; and remember that if I have but two eyes in my head, I have a hundred in my pocket, and hands too, — hands," he muttered in a low but audible whisper, "which will do any thing I bid them, and which never spare a traitor."

The word "traitor" restored Blacker to his self-possession. He came forward, protested against deserving such a charge, acknowledged that he might have been careless, promised that he would take care to remove any impression of the kind; and Pearce, receiving his excuses, shook hands with him at last, and apparently restored him to favour. "And now go," he added, "and send that brute Connell to me directly. Stop," he cried, as Blacker was leaving the room; "I have one more thing to say. Come back, and shut the door. Have you seen *him* to-day?"

"He was at the inn this morning at eleven o'clock, I know," said Blacker; "and afterwards he went to Atkinson's, for I watched him there; and canny Charles was to watch him afterwards. George the hostler told me they thought he was going away in a day or two."

"Did they know who he was?" asked Pearce.

"No," replied Blacker.

"And you did not give them a hint?"

"Not I. I merely stood about in the yard when they were talking about him, and so found out what he was doing."

"Has he seen Connell yet, and the boy?"

"Yes, yesterday morning. Connell told me he came to Wheeler's wife, saw the boy, and seemed struck with him. Connell said it was quite strange to see him. The boy behaved ill, and swore, upon

which Connell had a sermon given him, and something was said about his being sent to school."

"Very good, very good," muttered Pearce; "this will do. Has he been to the Priory yet?"

"Not yet, I am sure," said Blacker, "for I have had my eye on him ever since you ordered me, and he cannot have gone anywhere without my knowing it."

"Let me know," said Pearce, "when he does go; for it cannot be long first. And so the old Lord is come back? You will have an eye there too, Blacker, and an eye on my Lady."

"I saw her go up to the Priory about an hour ago," said Blacker, "in a little low phaeton, with a servant on horseback."

"To the Priory?" muttered Pearce. "Humph! And where is *he* now?"

"Canny Charles will tell me this evening," said Blacker.

"Find out if he is gone to the Priory too," said Pearce, "and let me know at once. I shall be at my lodgings all the evening. And now, good day."

But, once more, Blacker was called back before the door had closed, and Pearce, shutting it carefully after him, and looking round the room as if afraid lest the walls had ears, came up to him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, and looking fixedly in his face, said to him in a low voice, "Are you sure of Wheeler?"

"As sure as I am of myself," was the answer.

"Humph!" muttered Pearce. And once more looking Blacker in the face, as if he would penetrate into the very bottom of his thoughts,— "He knows things," said Pearce, in the same low distinct voice, "he knows things which he should not know, and he has threatened to disclose them."

"Has he?" asked Blacker, as if alarmed.

"It is against our laws," said Pearce—and he paused. "And our laws must be obeyed," he continued.

For a moment Blacker seemed to shudder and recoil from Pearce's touch; but Pearce, with the same fixed, searching, significant gaze, retained his hold of him.

"Our laws must be obeyed," he repeated, "and to the letter, or all is lost. Blacker, my fine fellow, there must be no flinching."

"I never thought of flinching," said Blacker sulkily, and yet seemingly nerving himself to hear the rest.

"I never thought you did," said Pearce; "I know you too well." And with an encouraging clap on the shoulder, and a relaxation of his countenance, he let go his hold. Blacker seemed to recover and take breath, as if from a species of fascination.

"Keep watch on him," said Pearce—"and that is all."

There was something significant in Blacker's eyes, as he looked up and repeated "That is all?"

"Yes, all—that is all:" and then, as if correcting himself, "for the present, that is."

"Very well," said Blacker.

"Good bye. And now send Connell."

It was some time before Connell arrived, and in the meanwhile Pearce paced backwards and forwards along the sanded floor of the little room, with his arms folded, and resting every now and then, as if in intense thought, with his forehead on the mantel-piece. Once his dark, gloomy, but energetic eye caught a gaudy-coloured print like a valentine over the fireplace. It represented three hearts transfixed with arrows, with the words "Mary, Jesus,

and Joseph" over them, and a devotional inscription at the bottom, containing an invocation to all three. He crossed himself at the sight, muttered over some form of words, which might have been an Ave Maria, and then relapsed into thoughtfulness, from which he was disturbed by a low knock at the door.

"There are no letters, sir, to-day," said a little girl who opened it with fear and trembling. "But here is a parcel come by the coach. Three and sixpence, sir, to pay, from Preston."

Pearce took the parcel, and eagerly tore it open. Some papers containing lists of names and printed tracts, apparently for circulation, he put into his pocket, and then sat down to open a letter in cypher, which it cost him some trouble to translate.

"The cypher changed again," he muttered. "Why, they are more cautious than ever. Has there been any treachery, I wonder?" and he proceeded to read: "'You will have no more letters by the post yet, for the post-office people have noticed the foreign letters. Government has got wind of something. F. C. will forward those from Lyons in a parcel by coach to the Hen and Chickens.' Humph! more caution. 'You have committed yourself to Wheeler. He is not one of us, and never will be, and has his own views and plans, and you will never be able to make use of him as you propose. He has even threatened, unless we do what he wishes. He is too sharp and too wicked for you. If you cannot get the papers from him quietly, we must not mind ——' (here was a blank). 'He might ruin us all.'

"Fools!" said Pearce impatiently. "Fools, to think I needed to be told this! 'You will send us word regularly of V.'s movements. He has sold his Yorkshire property,—we learned this by X. Z., and has made up his mind to live at the P. You

will let us know how long he remains at H., and whether he goes to the castle and sees L. E. She is quite firm; and at present so is he, and there seems to be no chance of any change. But they have not met since they parted at Florence, and we have resolved on waiting patiently a little longer, and making another trial.’”

As Pearce came to these last words he laid down the letter with a cool smile, which implied no little contempt of the writer, and no inclination to enter into his views. “Another trial!” he muttered. “Have they not had trials enough already? Do they think to bring him round now, with his obstinacy and what he calls his conscience, when he has once got out of their net? They might have done it once, when he was younger and knew nothing; but he has fallen into other hands now, and they are no match for him. No!” and he looked up triumphantly; “those two will never be one now; and, what is more, they never shall be. Never! never! I have sworn it by my hatred and my vengeance—sworn it on my knees, if my hand and the power it wields can prevent it. Never, never!” and it would have given a study for the picture of a fiend to have watched his face as he uttered these words. But the paroxysm of passion was momentary. He smothered it over, assumed the same cold iron cast of countenance, and proceeded to decypher the letter. “‘If all fails, and he will not come over, we must try something else. He must not be allowed to remain at H., where he will do us great harm. He makes no secret of his intentions, and will work against us in every possible way. But you will take no steps to attack him till you hear from us. If he can be brought over by fair means, well and good; if not, we must be rid of him in some other way.’”

“Rid of him in some other way!” repeated Pearce. “Rid of him in some other way! Yes, there are many other ways of getting rid of him. Men have been driven from their homes by disgust, by disappointment, by threats, by abuse, by calumny, by fear. There is no difficulty in this. But this would not be vengeance—not my vengeance. To make him drink of his own cup—to stab him with his own dagger—to have him here with my foot upon his neck, and tell him it was I who did it!” He stood fixed in the very posture which he would have assumed had his deadly enemy been lying under his feet; and his eye lighted up with fierce exultation. The letter, however, was not finished; and with the air of a man who could shake off all personal feeling and apply himself at once to business, he reverted to it. “‘You will beware of the Abbé; he is still at the old Lord’s: but he is, you know, a mere Protestant at heart, and you must not trust him. We shall soon have him removed, and you may communicate freely with the person who comes in his stead. Of course you will do what can be done for the Liberals at the election. Make use of Wheeler’s set if you can safely. But again remember that he has his own plans, and must not be trusted, and, unless he gives up the papers, all may be lost. Write to us every other day if you have any thing to communicate, and send your letters under cover to X. Z.’”

Pearce had scarcely time to read the end of the letter, when he heard another knock at the door, and, with a heavy lumbering tread, his face inflamed with habits of intoxication, his eyes bloodshot, and an expression of haggardness and fear in his lip and mouth, Connell came in.

“Drinking again, sirrah!” said Pearce to him, in the same cold, stern voice which he had assumed towards Blacker. “Drinking again!”

Connell, like every other person who came into contact with this singular personage, seemed to quail under his eye, and stammered out some excuse.

"I will have no excuses," said Pearce. "You have been at the public-house all this morning, and all yesterday afternoon."

Connell attempted to deny it.

"How dare you," said Pearce, in his low, distinct voice, which seemed to thrill through and fascinate his hearer; "how dare you tell a lie to me, who know every thing that you say and do? You went at four o'clock yesterday afternoon to the Swan tap; you there met Roberts and Jackson; you sat drinking with them till six; you then went down by the Brewhouse lane; you spoke to a person by the way, and you told him, half-drunk as you were, that you would meet him at the Ruins to-night, and help him. You know whom I mean. And now, when I know every word you utter, and every thing you do, how dare you tell me a lie?"

The poor wretch, as if aghast at the presence of a supernatural being, listened without a word of reply, and showed by his silence the accuracy of Pearce's statement.

"I tell you again," said Pearce, "that I have eyes in every place, and tongues to tell me every thing. Never lie to me, for it is of no use. And now, sirrah, give me a true account of all that passed when the gentleman who saved the boy came to see him. Tell me every thing, at your peril!"

Connell, faltering and frightened, endeavoured, but very imperfectly, to give a clear narrative, and Pearce listened patiently without interrupting it. He knew human nature too well to attempt to hasten him. It appeared by Connell's story that the stranger had made inquiries the day after the fire, and had found out Margaret's lodging, with the

view of giving the poor people some relief; that on seeing the boy he seemed struck, as Connell expressed it, all of a heap; had stood gazing on him, as he lay on the straw, with a look of painful surprise, as if struggling to retrace past circumstances, and bring to light some dim and indistinct vision. He had lifted the cluster of brown hair from the boy's forehead; spoken to him with a voice softened and sad, as if with an interest deeper than that of ordinary benevolence; had returned more than once to look on him, and had groaned heavily as a ray of light fell more full on his face. It was not till the boy spoke, and spoke, as he had done to Mabel, in language which revolted the ear, that the stranger turned away, as if in disgust and disappointment; and rebuked both Connell and his wife for permitting one so young to be brought up in such profaneness and vice. Even then he called Connell aside, and interrogated him closely on his family, the number of his children, the age of the boy, where he was born, and other questions of the kind.

"To all which," said Pearce, at this point of the story, "you answered properly?"

"Yes, sir," said Connell.

"And boldly?" asked Pearce.

"Yes, sir, as you told me."

"Did he seem to have any doubt, or suspect any thing?"

"Nothing," answered Connell.

"You are sure, nothing?"

"Quite sure," said Connell.

"And then," said Pearce, "he offered to send him to school, did he not?"

"He did," said Connell. "And I told him I must think of it."

"Very good," said Pearce. "You will let me know when you see him again. And you will give

no answer of any kind till I have told you what to do. And now, man, tell me what Wheeler gives you for helping him at the Ruins to-night?"

Once more Connell seemed aghast at the secret knowledge which Pearce possessed of all his movements. "Five shillings, and beer," he stammered out.

"And you are to carry away what you have got there to the quarries to-night? How many of these things have you got there?" And he pulled out of his pocket a pikehead weapon of the same kind as that which had been produced by one of the gang in the other room.

"I do not know," said Connell.

"How many carts are there to be?"

"Two," said Connell.

"And pray how came Wheeler to trust you, a drunken sot as you are, with this piece of work? Why, for five shillings and a pot of beer you would betray your own father!"

"I won't betray him," said Connell. "Why should I? What should I get by it?"

There was a pause, during which Pearce collected his countenance into the same piercing, steadfast look with which he had awed Blacker, and, coming up close to the ruffian, he said, in the same low distinct voice, "But Wheeler could betray you!"

Connell started, as if shot. The blood forsook his cheeks, and he turned to Pearce with a look of the most abject, supplicating terror. Without appearing to notice it, Pearce continued looking steadfastly on him, and again uttered the same words, "But Wheeler could betray you!"

"Who told him?" exclaimed Connell. "Who told him? I never confessed to any one but the priest. No one upon earth knows it but the priest, and you."

And in the same low distinct tone of voice Pearce whispered, "Wheeler knows it, and can give you up at any time. And this is why he has employed you for a work which, if you chose to peach, would cost him his own neck."

The poor criminal sunk down in a chair, and trembled from head to foot. Pearce allowed him a few minutes to recover; but he had no intention of relieving him from his fear. He pulled a newspaper out of his pocket, and, casting his eye over a file of notices and advertisements, proceeded to read one which described Connell's person exactly, and offered a large reward of more than 500*l.* to any one who would give information which might lead to his apprehension.

"Wheeler," said Pearce again, "has seen this, and he is a needy man, and a cunning man; and no one here has seen it, but himself and me. You are in his power, and for that reason he ventures to trust you. But he has been to the police, and, I suspect, about this."

Connell's hat had fallen on the floor, his arms had dropt, as if lifeless, by his side, and the sweat broke out in large drops upon his forehead; while Pearce, so far from comforting or encouraging him, proceeded to read the advertisement again, comparing every point of the description with Connell's appearance, and going over them slowly and steadily, as if wholly insensible to, or even taking pleasure in, the agony of his victim. At last Connell could bear it no longer, and he fell down on his knees, and, wringing his hands, intreated Pearce to save him.

"You can save me, you know you can!" he cried; "you can do any thing, — you promised you would, — you saved me once before, when you brought me from Ireland!"

"I can save you, I know," said Pearce, "if only

we can stop Wheeler's mouth. He's a troublesome and a dangerous fellow, and 500*l.* would soon tempt him. He has seen the paper, and he knows you did it, and can give information all about it, which would hang you up in a minute; and, as I tell you, I have seen him talking with the policeman. Nobody else has seen it, and there are no placards here, nor likely to be, or I can stop them; so you are quite safe, except from him."

"How did Wheeler find it out?" asked Connell, falteringly.

"I am sure I do not know," said Pearce, "but he told me all about it; told me where you hid the gun after the shot was fired; and how, when the old man struggled, you knocked him back with the butt-end; and where you threw away the frieze coat; and about the marks on your waistcoat;" — and, with his eyes fixed steadily on the convulsed countenance of Connell, he proceeded slowly: "He knew every word the old man said; how he begged for mercy, and prayed you might not go to hell for it; and spoke to you of the tithes he had forgiven you, and the potatoes he used to send you through the famine."

Connell put his hands before his face, and groaned with anguish. "Oh, Mr. Pearce!" he cried, "if you had not put it into my head, I should never have done it! He never did me any harm, except putting me out of that bit of potato ground."

"I put it into your head, man!" said Pearce; "how could I put it into your head? I told you, if a parson kept you out of your rights, you might give him a little fright, that was all, — and then you went and shot him!"

"You told me," said Connell, "that he was a parson, and all parsons ought to be got rid of; and you said he was an enemy of our religion, and

cursed by the blessed Pope, and a devil; and that there was no harm in getting rid of devils; and then you said there would be no difficulty, and I might make a clean breast of it at confession, and do a little penance, and all would be right, and I should get the ground, and no one be the wiser; and this was the way to make ould Ireland free. I remember every word, as well as if it were yesterday; and the devil put it all into my heart. Would to God I had been murdered myself rather than have done it!"

"Pooh! pooh!" said Pearce, "what is all this fuss about? It is not the first parson who has been punished in Ireland for keeping what does not belong to him, and it won't be the last; and you are no worse than others. The only thing to think about is how we shall stop Wheeler's mouth — that dangerous, treacherous fellow; I would not trust my own life in his hands for a mint of money. "Eh?" he added, and looked aside at Connell, as if hoping that a thought might suggest itself to him, without requiring to be expressed. "Eh?" he repeated, "how are we to stop his mouth?" — and, as if leaving the question to work its way, he went to the window, and whistled.

Connell once more buried his face in his hands, and continued silent.

"At what o'clock," said Pearce, after a pause, and turning sharply round, "are you to be at the Ruins to-night?"

"Ten o'clock," said Connell.

"Any moon?" said Pearce.

"I do not know," answered Connell, doggedly.

"Any one to be with you?" asked Pearce.

"No," said Connell, in the same dogged way.

Pearce went again to the window, and began again to whistle. "He's a vile heretic, that

Wheeler," he continued, "and one that will do us mischief;" and, as he uttered the words, a careful observer might have detected a little faltering in the voice, as if arising from a momentary swelling in the throat; but he stifled it with a short cough, and the cough broke the stupor in which Connell seemed sunk.

"I thought," he said, "he was a friend of your's, Mr. Pearce?"

"No friend of mine," said Pearce: "I tried to bring him round, and make him useful, but he would not do for us. Blacker is the man I like—a sound, honest, trustworthy fellow. Wheeler has got too much of the devil in him; and he knows a great deal more than is quite convenient, more especially for your neck, Connell,—eh, man? A rope and a gallows, and no priest to anoint you; no pleasant prospect, eh?"

"But Wheeler won't peach," said Connell; "why should he give me up? Why, I could give him up, for all that."

"Ay, ay, so you could; but pray what would you gain by that? How would it save your own neck from paying forfeit for the parson's bullet, by putting Wheeler into gaol for his tricks with those arms? And, after all, he would only be tried, and perhaps acquitted; or the lawyers would let there be some flaw in the parchment; or else there would come down a warrant from the Secretary of State, and he would only be sent to Botany Bay, and get a good place there, or be returned to his family. Why, they could easily get up a petition for him, and find plenty of members of parliament to threaten ministers if they did not let him go; and ministers do not like to provoke people now-a-days. But it would be very different with you, my man. They may not mind much in Ireland; but you are in

England now, and English people have not much sympathy with shooting at landlords and parsons, though they are Protestants, and do like to let their own land as they choose. I suspect, man, your chance would be small."

Connell once more let his hands drop as in despair. And Pearce continued standing at the window, and affected to watch the drops of rain which were chasing each other down the glass.

"Are you sure," he said, once more, "there will be no one but you two to-night?"

"Not till the carts come," said Connell, "and they are not to be there till ten o'clock."

"Humph!" muttered Pearce. "He's a slight, weakly fellow, that Wheeler; I could twist him round my thumb."

"Not when he has his pistols with him," said Connell.

"Does he always carry pistols?" said Pearce.

"Always, on such nights," answered Connell, sharply; and there was another pause.

"That's a deep well in the Priory court," said Pearce, "by the great yew tree; how many feet water are there in it?"

"Twenty," muttered Connell, "or thereabouts;" and they were silent again.

"There was a man," continued Pearce, "in Hawkstone, some years back, who fell into a well, and was never heard of again for thirty years, when they found his skeleton in cleaning it out."

Connell was silent; but something had come across his mind, and he started up, and, confronting Pearce, who endeavoured to avoid his eyes, said, with a voice in which bitterness of suffering was mingled with anger, and scorn, and defiance, "Mr. Pearce," he said, "are you the foul fiend himself, or only his head clerk? Blood enough already, for

your head and mine ! Blood enough already !" And he left the room.

Pearce stood for some minutes motionless, half-alarmed, half-surprised, and chilled with that shame and remorse, which even the most hardened and most guilty cannot shake off, when rebuked by inferiors guilty like themselves. But his was not a mind to give way to such feelings. He whistled, as if to turn the current of his thoughts ; and once more began pacing the room. He uttered nothing ; but his thoughts were dark and deep, and showed themselves in the workings of his stern and malignant features. They were thoughts of a vast and deep-laid conspiracy, in which the fate of kingdoms was involved, and in which, though a subordinate, he was an active and accomplished agent. They reverted to the days of his youth, when he had been taken up by one of its most penetrating leaders, and tutored in all the mysterious craft of intrigue—an intrigue of which religion was the pretext, and ambition the main-spring, and which was carried on by a machinery at once so gigantic in its extent, so secret in its operations, so united in its combination, so steady and undeviating in its aim, and so adapted in all its parts to the passions and wants of human nature, that to a human eye nothing could resist it, or save even thrones and kingdoms from falling under the rod of a religious tyranny. He thought of the lessons which he had there received ; of acquiring power, and exercising it remorselessly and fearlessly, with one sole view to the aggrandisement of his society ; of the modes by which the minds of men might be laid open, and be made slaves to those who were privy to their weaknesses and crimes ; of the grand rule of all worldly ambition, "divide et impera," set friend against friend, power

against power, and you become master of both. He took from his pocket the papers which had reached him in the packet, and contemplated with exultation the account there given of the progress of their influence, and the increase of their revenues; while the governments and countries over which they were stretching their arms in secret sat still in unsuspecting confidence, unconscious of the mischief which was working in their very vitals. To be engaged in the management of such a secret and gigantic plot was in itself full of interest and excitement to a mind like his. It gave him, palled as he was at an early age with a licentious life, something still to stimulate his enterprise and feed his imagination. It exercised all the powers of a penetrating and calculating intellect: it gave him a personal importance which atoned for the degrading sense of dependence and inferiority, to which his low birth had exposed him in early life; and the bitterness of which, to his haughty spirit, had been aggravated by the contemptuous repulses which he had encountered in his effort to obtain a footing in higher classes of society: and if it held out a prospect of revenge upon the classes who had thus despised him, it touched him also in a tenderer point; without which, perhaps, he would never have thrown himself, with his whole heart and soul, into the position which he then occupied—a position of great risk, requiring the utmost delicacy of management—bringing him into contact with agents whom it was impossible to employ without risking treachery on their part, and whom he could only hope to control by playing them one against the other, and fearlessly resolving to sacrifice any of them the moment they became dangerous. Pearce had his private ends and personal ambition; and his am-

bition was a longing for revenge. It burned in his breast with a deep, steady, resolved hatred, which never allowed a thought of pity to come before it and its victim ; and which, if ever conscience intruded for a moment, threw itself at once into the form of justice—of a deserved and equitable requital for a deadly injury ; and assumed even the appearance of piety, because the same blow which laid the being whom he hated at his feet laid prostrate also the enemy of his faith, and the determined and dangerous antagonist of the religious body to which he was solemnly pledged, and in whose prosperity he was told that the interests of Christendom were involved.

But the thoughts could not continue for ever. There was work, active work, to be done. A few minutes later, a respectable clerical-looking person, with his face closely shaven, a dark head of hair, and a pair of green spectacles which completely covered his eyes, issued from a little garden gate, which communicated with a back street of Hawkstone ; and, after threading one or two narrow lanes without any houses in them, he opened another similar door by a private key, and soon found himself in the little study of the Rev. Patrick O'Leary, the bland, liberal, and accomplished Roman priest, who had recently settled in Hawkstone to superintend the erection of what the people persisted in calling a new Catholic Chapel.

CHAP. X.

WITH Bentley's narrow income, and the numberless calls upon it, the loss of his watch, which he valued also as a legacy from an old aunt, was a very serious consideration: and he resolved to retrace his steps to the ruins in the hope of recovering it. It never occurred to him, that as the obligation of the Temperance Society only bound men to abstain from one sin, and this on the ground of its inconvenience, a member of the society might feel no difficulty about a distinct sin, particularly where tempting from its convenience. And he did not recollect, that, just as he was entering the archway into the ruins, there had been a little crowd and crushing of some bystanders, in the midst of which it was not impossible that his watch had either been stolen or forced from his pocket. He walked, therefore, as fast as he was able, back through the park. But the sun had already set. The sound of the returning band, as it entered the High Street of Hawkstone, reached him from a distance, and told him that he would find the ruins deserted. Twilight was coming on, and, if Bentley had honestly confessed, he would have acknowledged that he preferred a visit to the Priory in broad daylight. As the thought came across him, he laughed at his own folly, and walked towards it so much the faster. And yet notions, and fancies, and idle tales, which were current about the place, would occur to him. For there was a gloom and an evil destiny which seemed to hang over the spot,

and the family to which it belonged; and many were the stories which tradition preserved, some old and some more recent, which, mixed up with popular superstitions, almost seemed to imply that a curse from Heaven lay upon them. In the vault underneath the Oratory there lay, not the remains, but the place where the remains should have lain, of Sir Roger de Hawkstone, the bold profligate courtier of Henry VIII., by whose arm the monarch had expelled the monks, plundered their possessions, including the most sacred ornaments of the chapel and the altar, and made over the whole property around to his avaricious minion. And the remains of Sir Roger de Hawkstone never reached their place of rest in holy ground. He was seized suddenly with his death pangs in the midst of a mad drunken revel, in the hall of his new house, the hall which, after the example of the Protector Somerset, he had built out of the fragments of the consecrated cloister, and, like most of the nobility of that day, had hung with tapestry, and adorned its sideboards with chalices and plate, which he had plundered from the chapel itself. He died, and the room where they laid him in state caught fire with the torches: and before the flames were got under, the whole wing of the house was a mass of ruins; and only one blackened mutilated limb could be discerned and extricated to give it the mockery of a Christian burial. By that lay his two wives; one who had died by poison, administered, it was always believed, by her own husband; the other, in giving birth to a still-born child. By them lay three children, all childless, two daughters and one son, — the son snatched away in his boyhood; the eldest daughter killed with a broken heart; the youngest, the proud haughty Lady Eleanor, childless also, and brought to her grave with hands stained with blood and a

tainted fame. Then followed another branch of the family, of whom but one, the good Sir James, had escaped the hereditary curse. His successor was murdered by a mob close by the tall ash tree, which shot up by the Priory's chimney. His son, Sir Hildebrand, had left behind him a name of vice, and debauchery, and superstition, with which mothers in the neighbourhood would frighten unruly children, and threaten them with the "wicked Sir Hildebrand." Then came a son, who was driven from his estate by a dishonest law-suit, and the property passed into a line, which had gradually encumbered it with debt, harassed the tenants, parted with some of its finest portions ; involved itself in election squabbles, and profligate extravagances, until, followed by the hatred of all around him, the last owner, General Villiers, had taken refuge on the Continent, where he died, and his only son laid him, not in the grave of his fathers, but in the Strangers' Cemetery at Rome. But, before that, another name had been added to the melancholy catalogue—a name never pronounced by any of the older peasantry without an affectionate and reverent sorrow—the good Lady Esther. She was the wife of General Villiers, and daughter of John Earl of Claremont, whose estates adjoined the Priory. And like her father she was a Roman Catholic, but a Catholic more than a Romanist ; scarcely tainted with the sins of Popery, and a character such as might be formed, and, we may trust, has often been formed, in the school of Fenelon, Pascal, and Borromeo. Even she had not escaped the general inheritance of evil : compelled by her father, against her will, to marry General Villiers, she had found him cunning, narrow-minded, jealous, and revengeful. One son was born to them, whom she was permitted to bring up for a few years, and

whom, as far as childhood can be formed, she had formed to be the image of her own character. About that time the embarrassments of the General thickened on him: his temper became soured, his conduct tyrannical; losing all sense of religion himself, the deep earnest piety of his wife provoked from him only contempt and persecution. And, without listening to her earnest and tearful prayers, he took her child, now grown to be a boy, from her care, carried him abroad, and left her to linger out one year and three months in patient solitary suffering, and then to be borne amidst the tears and blessings of the poor to her last earthly resting-place in the Priory of Hawkstone.

And even beyond Lady Esther the curse seemed to continue. At the death of General Villiers, the title to the large estates of Hawkstone had been disputed. His son remained abroad for years, under circumstances which no one understood; and even now, when his title had been acknowledged, and his fortune increased by a considerable bequest from an uncle, it was reported in Hawkstone that Ernest Villiers had become himself embarrassed; that his estates in Yorkshire were to be sold; that he was about to turn Papist, if he had not become one already; and, as the only mode of escaping from his difficulties, he was to marry his cousin, Lady Eleanor,—not a very probable combination: but the sale of the Yorkshire estates had been announced that very day in the papers, and Bentley, as he approached the ruins, sighed to think of the futility and mutability of all earthly grandeur.

Before he descended the brow of the valley, the twilight had deepened so much that he found it difficult to search for his watch along the path which he was retracing. The stars were coming out one by one; the horizon in the west was fading into

the dark sky, and a pale crescent moon just faintly peered over the stag-headed skeleton of a great oak, round which the Hawkstone brook was rippling, and which was known familiarly among the cottagers by the name of Prior Silkstede's Oak ; for this also had its tale, and a tale of sorrow. It was named from a village legend of the last prior, a weak but not vicious man, who had been harassed and persecuted by Cromwell until, in an evil hour, he consented to surrender the Priory to the king, rather than risk the miserable fate of the monks of the Charter House of London, five of whom had already died under the hardships of their usage ; five were brought, by the severity of their imprisonment, to the brink of death, and many others had been executed. But no sooner was the surrender made, than the most bitter remorse had seized him. When the visitors came to carry off the vestments and plate, he had stood on the steps of the altar, and solemnly denounced the sacrilege, repeating the curse imprecated by the founder of the Priory upon all who should disturb his gifts. When forced to desist by one of the commissioners, he had gone to the foot of the old oak, and, there gathering round him the peasantry assembled on the spot, had warned them, with a bitter confession of his own infirmity, against partaking in the evil thing, and bringing down upon their heads the wrath of God. He had then left them, and wandered, no one knew whither, till one morning he was found lying on his face, cold and stiffened, with his hands clasped, as in prayer, under the old oak tree, turned to the already-demolished Priory, as if he had come to die at least within sight of its walls. And none of the villagers liked to pass at night near the Silkstede oak. Many were the fearful appearances which were recorded to have been seen there ; and latterly they had singularly

multiplied. When the keepers made their morning rounds, the trampled grass and broken bushes betrayed that persons had been there in the night ; it was generally supposed poachers. Voices had been heard, and even figures seen, about the ruins by late market people. And even Mr. Morgan had laughingly told Bentley, that, on his riding over the night before to Hurst, he also had passed near them, and seen a light moving about within the chapel. Bentley was not sorry to find that it was becoming too dark to search for his watch, and that his wisest plan would be to cross the valley at once, and make his way into the high road. He was not superstitious, but he was not a scoffing sceptic, and therefore he was not ashamed to feel a certain awe, and even credulity, in all that related to the mystery of a world of spirits. To effect his purpose it was necessary to follow the path by the oak, and then strike off along the Priory wall, passing under the great east window of the chapel, and so gaining the little rude bridge which crossed the brook below it. But as he approached the oak he could not help starting at the sight of a figure beneath it. It was a female, seemingly of the lower orders, sitting with her head buried in her hands, and motionless, as if in deep distress. She no sooner heard the sound of footsteps than she sprang up, with a faint cry, and was hastening to meet Bentley, until, as she came near, she turned back suddenly, as if she had mistaken the person, and diverged into the thicket, where he lost sight of her. Bentley stopped to see if she would appear again, or wanted any thing, but to no purpose ; and he passed on, wondering what could have brought a poor woman, at so late an hour, to such a place. But his wonder was not to cease : as he turned the corner of the north wall, and was making his way, with some difficulty, over the frag-

ments of the building and broken ground, on which the dormitories had stood, not without fear of falling into some of the choked-up vaults and arches with which the ground was full, his eye turned to one of the lancet windows, rich with thick painted glass, and still perfect, in the little oratory adjoining the chapel. Was it his fancy, or the reflection of the moon? But a faint glimmering, which struggled through one of the panes, fixed him to the spot. It grew in a few moments clearer and clearer; and Bentley could not doubt that there was a light within. He would have gone at once to see who was there, but he remembered the rusty chains and padlocks with which he had seen, a few hours before, that the iron grate was fastened; and he was too well aware how many turbulent and evil-disposed persons there were in the neighbourhood of Hawkstone to expose himself to any collision with such visitors in such a spot. He stopped, therefore, holding his breath, and, it must be confessed, with a beating heart. But the light remained stationary, and, seemingly, was the reflection of a lantern, not immediately in the oratory, but in some adjoining passage. His next impulse was to move gently to the window, and look in, but it was at too great a height from the ground; and his prudence then suggested that it would be quite sufficient to mention the next morning to Mr. Atkinson what he had seen, and to pursue the inquiry by daylight. But just as he had reached the east end of the chapel, he was again startled by a clashing and fall of something like arms; and a rough voice just above him, seemingly from the hollow of the wall, uttered a dreadful oath, to which another voice muttered out a grumbling, sulky answer. Bentley drew himself close to the wall, and buried himself in a huge mass of elder and ivy, driving from it a flight of sparrows

which had nestled there for the night. In another minute he heard two persons jump down on the pavement, and the light from the lantern streamed up. Some words passed between them, which Bentley could not understand, about "number nine" and "fourth lodge;" and then one of them he heard departing, with a promise to return in about half an hour, while the other proposed to remain. Could Bentley have seen into the chapel, he would have recognised in the former the coarse, ruffianly Irish vagrant, whose boy had been saved on the night of the fire. The other he might also have recognised, though with difficulty. He was younger, respectably dressed, with a quick, clever eye, but with features marked with passion and intemperance, and quivering at times with a lurking fear and suspicion of detection, as if he was in possession of some fearful secret, and was loaded with the consciousness of a deadly crime: and Bentley would scarcely have remembered in him the sharp intelligent lad at the National School, always foremost to answer questions and gain prizes, who, having left the school thoroughly tutored in reading and writing, and thoroughly untutored in any thing else, had soon plunged into a reckless career of vice, and had become one of the most notorious profligates of Hawkstone—a Socialist. He had covered up his lantern, and was pacing backwards and forwards at the east end of the chapel, whistling at intervals, while Bentley, drawn up close to the other side of the wall, and unable to move without making a noise in the bough of ivy, was deliberating, with no very comfortable feelings, what he should do. But before he could make up his mind, the same brutal voice which he had heard before called out, "Who goes there?" and at the same time the lantern was flashed out upon the building. Taken by surprise,

Bentley was on the point of answering, when a timid plaintive voice from the bottom of the building uttered faintly, "It's only I, George."

"Who's I?" said the brutal ruffian.

"It's Margaret," answered the female.

"And what do you want here with your whining and pining, and spying out what you have no business to spy? How came you here?"

"Connell told me I should find you here," said Margaret, with her voice faltering.

"And what do you want to find me for?"

"I want"—— said poor Margaret, and she ran up to him, and put her pale, wan, anxious face into his hands; "O George! I am starving: I have no friends, not one upon earth, and you have left me; and I am alone, and perishing, and I want!—O George, George! give me back my child!"

And she fell down, and clasping his knees looked up to him longingly and earnestly with her eyes streaming with tears, and her long hair cast back from a countenance where delicacy and beauty were still struggling with care and sorrow.

"Fool! what brings you here?" was the only reply which the ruffian vouchsafed, as he shook her from him. "Go back quietly, and here's something to keep you from starving," and he flung her a piece of money.

But she heeded it not. "No, not money; I want no money; I want yourself, George; I want you to love me—to love me as you did when you married me!"

"Married you?" cried the wretch with a hoarse laugh; "married you!—what's marriage?"

"Yes, married me!" said Margaret, with a firmer and prouder voice. "I am your own lawful wedded wife. No one has a right to separate us; you cannot leave me. Did you not take me to your chapel? Were we not married regularly, truly joined to-

gether for ever ? Would to God we had gone to the church as my father and mother did before me ! It could not have been so then."

"Why not?" asked the man insultingly. "What have your priests to do with marriage? What are their accursed contrivances, except to fasten persons, neck to neck, like galley-slaves, instead of allowing them their freedom? No, my good girl, we are wiser now. Go back quietly; find out another husband; I give you full leave, and shall never complain. Much better do this than whine and whimper in this way."

"Never, never!" cried the horror-struck, indignant Margaret. "O George! you did not say this when you knew me first. You swore to me you would never desert me. You used to kiss me, and love me, and call me your treasure, and hang over me, O how fondly! Do you remember when our child was born?"

"Dolt! idiot!" exclaimed the irritated man. "Hold your tongue, and begone!"

"May God help me! God have mercy upon me!" faltered the poor woman as she sunk upon her knees.

"Ay, ay, that's the right thing," cried the man with a horrible sneer; "go to your priests and your prayers, they'll comfort you; nothing can be better for you women."

"Nor for men either," she roused herself to say. "George, George! the time will come when you will die, and then you will think on me; and you will know that there is a God in heaven who avenges the poor; ay, in another world!"

"Ha! ha!" was the answer, as he burst into a loud laugh, which made the walls of the chapel ring, and Bentley's blood run cold.

"Yes," pursued Margaret, "there is a hell, and you will know it, sooner or later!"

“And so this is what you get from your priests?” said the man. “What right have they to tell me what is to become of me? They know nothing better than I do! Don’t they tell each man to judge for himself? and why am I not as good a judge as they are? Why, they do not believe what they teach themselves. Here have been five or six of them here this evening, keeping me from my work, all of them the best friends in the world, smothering each other with kindness, and to-morrow they will get up in their pulpits, and swear each that the other is a liar. No, woman, it’s all a sham from beginning to end,—a lie to cheat and frighten us, and we are beginning to know it. We’ll have no more priests!”

Margaret shuddered with horror. “Oh George! where have you been since you left me, that you have learned to speak in this way? What horrible company have you been keeping?”

“The company I chanced to meet,” said the man. “And I have learned what I have learned, and am what I am, and could not be otherwise; so do not be afraid, Margaret,” and he seemed softened by her deep compassion for him. “Do not be afraid, Margaret; we cannot help our opinions, you know. We do not form them ourselves, and no one has a right to punish or blame them. Why, even your priests tell you this, and your precious Whig ministers, all of them together; do not they, my good girl?”

And he attempted to put his hand on her shoulder, but she shrunk back as from a touch of contamination.

“And so, George,” she asked with a deep groan, “you are become an atheist?”

“An atheist!” said the man with an effort to laugh. “An atheist! no, not an atheist. We are religionists, rational religionists, all of us. We do

just what your priests do, and tell us to do. And we take their Bibles and read them ourselves, and if we do not like or understand what we read, why we know it is false. We use our reason, as they recommend us, and think for ourselves. And as for atheism — no, Margaret, so long as there is good brandy in the world, and good beef, and pudding, and a good fire, and a snug house and plenty of money, why a man can't be an atheist. He can worship these, you know, just as your gentlemen, and your manufacturers, and your Chancellors of the Exchequer are worshipping their good things. What care they for any thing, if they have but plenty of money?—and a good filled purse," he cried, rattling some sovereigns in his pocket, "is as good a thing to worship as any other. No, Margaret, never call me an atheist! It's a mere calumny — a bugbear."

"And you are rich, then?" faltered Margaret, looking up at him with a famished poverty-stricken face.

"Yes, it is better times now with me," said the wretch, "than when we used to be starving together without a fire, and scarcely clothes to cover us. And here's something for yourself. Take this," and he endeavoured to put two or three sovereigns into her hands, but she let them fall without notice.

"And what are you doing?" she asked.

"Doing?" said the man; "doing a great deal that one of these days you'll hear of. You should have been here five hours ago, up in the wall as I was, and heard that young jackanapes who wants to be member of parliament tell us what we ought to do. We are going to recover our rights, my girl; and we'll have a little gentle agitation, a

little moral influence, a little quiet pressure. Ah, ah!" he cried, and threw open his coat, so that the light fell on a couple of brace of pistols. "A little moral influence! ha, ha! moral influence of starving mechanics, with guns on their shoulders and pikes in their pockets. Hark!" He stopped. "Is that ten o'clock?" and the distant chime of the Hawkstone bells just faintly reached Bentley's ear. "Stop here, Margaret," he said to the poor woman, who was trembling with alarm, "and you shall see what you shall see, and know pretty well what I've been doing, — only," and here he uttered a horrible blasphemous oath, "if one word of what you have seen this night ever pass your lips" — and he looked at her and put his hand on his pistols, "as sure as you are a living woman!" —

"Does no one know you are here?" said Margaret, faintly.

"Not a soul but that Irish brute Connell, who dares not peach."

"I fancied," said Margaret, "as I was waiting for you, that I saw another person coming. I fancied it was the parson."

"The parson!" exclaimed the man. "How I should like to catch the parson at ten o'clock at night in the Priory ruins, prying into my secrets! — if I would not slit his throat from ear to ear with as much coolness as he would mend his own pen!"

Bentley heard it, and at that moment the cold air irritated his throat, and he was on the point of coughing.

"Hold the lantern, girl, and do not be frightened!" and, giving her the lantern, he lighted a match and went down to another part of the ruins. And the next minute the poor girl heard a rushing, wavering, roaring sound, and a rocket with a prodigious train of fire rose up into the air, throwing a glare of light

on the masses of walls and the grim grotesque faces with which the traceries were studded.

"Did you see that, Margaret?" said the fellow as he returned; "is not that a good blaze? Do you think we do not know how to manage our fire? and won't we make a firework of every house and farm in the country, unless they do as we choose? What's the use of science, and lectures, and Mechanics' Institutes, if they cannot teach us a little useful chemistry? Come here, girl," and with a hoarse diabolical laugh he pulled her into the antechapel.

"Now, look out there to the north, over the pillar, two minutes more:" and he began to whistle, and, before the two minutes had expired, the poor terrified Margaret saw in the distant sky another rocket shoot up, which broke and fell in a shower of sparks, but at the distance of several miles.

"Do you see that?" said the man; "is not that a clever mode of talking secrets with one's fingers at six miles distance? Now then, look there, through the window, out by the hills, where the quarries are. There it goes!" he cried.

And another rocket shot up in that direction.

"Once more come along, you poor fool!" and he dragged her reluctantly to the outside of the chapel, round to the east end, and within a few feet of the bushes in which Bentley was hidden. "Look out for the forest, there ought to be two there to-night. Ay, I thought they were awake;—fine fellows those pitmen! capital coals they work, and capital hammers they have." And as two rockets rose up side by side, over the dark outline of the mountainous district which formed the mining part of Hawkstone Forest, the man seized Margaret by the arm, and almost crushed it with his violence. "And now you see what I have been doing; and if you dare breathe a word of this!"——and once more he

threw open his coat. "If I have a tongue that can talk in this way, I have eyes that can see through stone walls, and ears in every house in the parish; and sooner than we'd be baulked of our rights, there's not a man of us who would hesitate to put you quietly out of the way, in the twinkling of an eye."

"You would not murder me?" cried the almost fainting Margaret; "you would not bear to have me murdered?"

"Murder you!" said the villain. "What do you use your cant words for? Murder means to do something wrong, and the bloody Whigs would hang one up for it. No, I would not murder you; but I tell you what I would do, — I would very quietly, and impelled by necessity," — (and the fellow laughed at his own ethics,) "and purely under the influence of circumstances, my good girl, because I could not help it, you know, and for the good of the community at large, for the general utility, — ha! ha! — to promote our happiness and comfort, (and what business have we with any thing else, as your parsons and your philosophers — ha! ha! — have been telling you for ages?) — why, Margaret (and he lowered his voice to a deep hoarse pitch, and put a pistol to her ear), "I would blow out your brains this instant."

"Spare me, spare me!" cried Margaret, sinking down on the ground.

"Spare you?" said the man, "to be sure I will; you have not peached yet, and do not intend to peach: and now get you gone, for I have some more work to do, and cannot stand here chattering. What are you stopping for?" he cried, with an oath, as the poor woman, who had risen up almost stupified, lingered and seemed summoning up courage to approach him again. "What do you want more?"

And once more she ran to him, fell at his feet, and clasped his knees. "O George, George! forgive me! spare me! don't kill me, don't be angry, only tell me, and I will go away quietly, quite quietly. You promised you would — O George, George! where is my baby?"

The wretch uttered a horrible imprecation, and almost stamped upon her. "What have you to do with your baby, you fool? What have any of us to do with babies, when we are starving and dying piece-meal? — men enough in the world already, without having more to breed a famine!" (Margaret's blood ran cold.) "Away with you!"

"No!" she cried, gaining courage with despair; "I will not away, I will not leave you! you promised I should know where it was. My own child, my beautiful baby! you took it away, and you shall give it me again. Would to God that I had died before I slept that night! We were starving, we were dying; but so long as that baby was on my breast, I could bear any thing. And now" — and a flood of tears followed at the thought of her own misery and desolation. "Tell me," she continued, "tell me only one thing, — is it safe? is it well? does it seem to know you? are they taking care of it? You promised they would take care of it. You swore to me it should want for nothing; that it should be quite happy."

"Ay! ay!" said the man, with something like a groan, "quite happy! It wants for nothing, woman, take my word for it, and never will."

"My God, my God!" cried the miserable woman, as she caught the gloomy expression of his eye, and a bitter smile about his lip, "it is not — no, George, you would not deceive me! you would not kill me! you do not mean" — and she stopped, choked with her dreadful anticipation,

"Go along, Margaret. Go along, and ask no questions. What's the use of asking questions? It's all right."

"All right—and my baby is well? Thank God! God Almighty be praised! O bless you, bless you! dear, dearest George!—quite well—you are sure, quite well?" And her voice faltered as she caught again the gloomy expression of his eye, though she thought it seemed moistened for the moment.

"Ay, go away—go away! all's right—all's right," said the man.

"No! no!" said Margaret, for she knew his notions of right, and that every thing expedient was right, and she trembled at his repetition of the phrase; for, hardened as he was, he rather wished to avoid a lie. "Do not say all's right. Tell me with your own lips my baby is well, quite well."

"Nonsense!" said the man; "why then, quite well." But the words choked him, and he tried to slur them over.

"And I may see it?" exclaimed Margaret. "I may see it? When may I go? I am barefoot—look, George, since you left me I have not had shoes to my feet: but miles, oh! millions of miles, would I walk to have one sight of my darling baby—one kiss! When may I go? to-night?"

"Yes, to-night, fool!" cried the wretch, exasperated and infuriated with her perseverance.

"And at once?" exclaimed Margaret; "and with you?"

"Yes, woman!" he cried, as he became furious; "at once, and with me!" and he seized her by the arm with a horrible execration, and dashed her on the ground a few yards off, close by the buttress of the chapel. "There! there!"

And Margaret saw fresh mould and turf, which had been disturbed, and the horrible truth flashed

upon her. She raised herself up on her knees, and gazed on him like a furious tigress ; and before he could recover himself, she had sprung and fastened round his neck. " Monster ! murderer ! Murder ! murder ! help ! help ! He has murdered my child ! Help ! help !" and her cries rang through the walls of the ruin, and startled the screech-owls in the wood. " Murder ! murder ! help ! help ! take him ! seize him ! he has murdered my child !"

" Silence, woman ! silence !" muttered the man, as he vainly endeavoured to release his neck from her iron grasp. " Silence !"

But Margaret's shrieks and cries for help did not cease ; and, without speaking, he contrived to disengage one hand and seize his pistol. But the next moment he was pulled upon his knees, and the pistol went off. There was a man wrestling with him in the bushes, wrestling desperately and frantically ; and as they rolled together on the ground, the villain saw that it was a young figure, of little strength, and unarmed. It was Bentley. " A priest, by all that's holy !" he muttered ; and throwing away the pistol, the only one which had been loaded, he coolly prepared himself for the struggle, with the certainty that he must be the master. " Not very wise to be here at this time of night," said the wretch as he succeeded in turning Bentley under him, and getting his knee upon his chest. " Not very wise to be prying into other people's secrets at this time of night !" and Bentley, sickening with the pressure, began to relax his hold of the ruffian's neck. With one hand pinning him down, with the other the man began to fumble in his coat, and a dreadful oath showed that he had a difficulty in finding what he sought. Bentley took the opportunity of springing up once more and making a last desperate effort ; but his strength

was nearly exhausted. "Down! down!" cried the villain. "Lie still!" and he dashed him to the ground: and as Bentley's eyes turned up, he saw something in the murderer's hand which glittered in the moonlight: his eyes closed, and, having just time to utter a prayer, in the next minute he was senseless.

CHAP. XI.

It is now time to return to the spot on the side of the hill, where, in the afternoon, the stranger had stopped and looked back, to catch the music of the Temperance Society, as it issued from the outskirts of the wood. As he saw the banners and the people, a dark shade came over his countenance, and with a gesture of impatience he turned away to pursue his solitary walk. One only expression escaped him as he stood a little farther on with arms folded, as if in deep and painful thought; but our readers may like to hear it, for it was uttered from the bottom of his heart. "O Rome! Rome! thou curse of the earth! what crimes thou hast to answer for!" and he then passed on.

But, buried in thought, he scarcely heeded even the magnificent scenery through which his path took him. He followed it once more to the top of the park, and then struck off down a steep declivity, the sides of which were furrowed into three deep ravines formed by the descending waters. The little streams themselves fell over masses of rock, here spreading into dark pools, and there eating unseen into the overhanging banks: and above them the sides rose steeply, covered with old oak trunks, and thorns, and fern, from which the deer were startled and bounded off as the stranger approached. At one point the eye could pass down over all this depth of wood, and range over a plain

beyond it, then lighted up with the bright evening shadows. To the west lay the forest of Hawkstone, stretching in a long black ridge, and terminated at one extremity by three conical mountain heights folding one behind the other, between which the sun was preparing to sink, and was then melting down their hard clear outline into a flood of the palest gold. Still nearer lay Claremont Castle, with its ruined keep and broken tower, hanging over the Hawkstone brook, which there widened into a stream, and wound snakelike through the meadows. Lord Claremont's modern house was not visible ; it was hidden by a projecting grove of oaks : and at one time the stranger, who had before scrupulously avoided looking in that direction, seemed to make up his mind to face the sight, and tried to discover it ; but in vain. At the bottom of the ravine, just where it opened and the stream made its way into the lower park, he rested against a gate near an ivy-covered, old brick building used by the keepers in killing the deer, and gazed on two gigantic firs whose tall red stems, all scarred and peeled, bore up their mass of dark green foliage from the bottom, nearly to a level with the top of the bank. Beneath them, but planted so as to form a group, was a fine stone pine carefully enclosed ; and the ground round its roots seemed to have been recently stirred, as if by some hand anxious for its growth ; and as the stranger looked upon the pine, his thoughts wandered off to a still brighter clime, and to hours when he sat amongst the gardens of Florence with another person at his side (and he gave an audible groan at the recollection), gazing on the tall wild outline of the same trees as they jagged the blue horizon of an Italian sky.

“Lady Esther's trees, sir,” said a respectable old peasant, coming up and taking off his hat to the

stranger, and exhibiting one of those fine, placid, sensible old faces for which the peasantry of England were once famed, and which even now may occasionally be seen on the Sunday in the open pews of a village church, looking up attentively to the preacher, and catching and applying every word. "My barometers," as Charles Bevan used to call them, when I wish to know if my sermon is understood.—"Poor Lady Esther's trees."

The stranger turned, took off his hat also, and looked mournfully on the intruder, who also seemed struck with something, without exactly knowing what.

"Sir Robert Haswell, the great painter," continued the peasant, "used to say those were the finest trees in the county; and he never came to the Priory, but my lady and he used to come up here; and I have seen them stand half an hour together close by this gate looking at them."

The stranger only answered, "Yes, my good man, they are very fine trees." "And what," he asked with a faint smile, "is that young tree?"

"That, sir," said the old man—"that's Master Ernest's pine—planted when he was born: and please God he may come to see how it is grown. Not a day passes but I look after it. But oh! sir; it is a sad thing for the owner of this fine place to be in foreign parts, and all this going to ruin; and the people caring nothing for any body, and knowing nothing of the landlord, except when they pay their rents. It is not good, sir, nor right; and things cannot be well when we are all left in this way to ourselves without our betters to take care of us."

"Certainly not," said the stranger, "but we will hope your master may come to live among you."

"Oh, sir, I hope he may; but there is bad news

at the house, they say. People talk of his having turned papist, and being in debt, and selling all his property, so soon after he has got it again. But then, it is not my business to talk of master's affairs. And I beg your pardon, sir."

"How long has he been absent?" asked the stranger.

"Ever since Lady Esther's death, sir. I have not set eyes on him these twenty years. The old General took him away before, but he came back then for a few days, and ever since that he has been with him in foreign parts, except when he was at college. And things have all gone wrong since the General's death, and now, just as we thought things were coming right, why, they say he's a ruined man."

"I hope not," said the stranger half smiling. "We must not believe all we hear."

"Oh, sir, if he would only come back and settle among us, and take an interest in us, and teach us what to do! Now, sir, things are all at sixes and sevens, and the bad people at Hawkstone are riding over the country; and the miners out there," and he pointed to the forest, "are getting arms, and having torchlight meetings. And the farmers won't pay their tithes, and the church is tumbling down, because the parish won't make a rate, and the poor care nothing for any body, for their wages are ground down almost to nothing, and nobody comes to see them. And if they want justice, they must go to Mr. Smith the cotton man, whom they have made a magistrate of, because he votes for the radicals, instead of having it from their own landlord. In short, sir, I wish it were the old times again, when landlords, and tenants, and labourers all hung together; and we had none of those ugly factories corrupting the men and women, and no fine talk

about reform, which for my part I believe is all nonsense. If people want reforming, they had better reform themselves, and that is the only way of reforming."

"I think so too," said the stranger. "This is the way to the house, is it not? Good afternoon." And the old man pointed out the path, looked after him with a sort of wonder, and could not help muttering to himself, "how very like!" A short turn of the path soon brought the stranger in view of the house. It was one of those "old and reverent piles," which no one has so well described as Wordsworth, with deep bay windows, and wrought gables, porches, and mullioned arches, high twisted chimneys, and pinnacles wreathed with ivy, and all the rich quaint carving of the Elizabethan age. At one corner stood a fragment of an older building, in the shape of a square massive tower, called Sir Bevor's tower, which rose up from the terrace, and recalled by its dark solid masonry the days when the lords of Hawkstone had been knights in armour, and Sir Bevor himself, whose figure lay cross-legged in the cathedral of——, had led a body of its yeomen to the Holy Wars. Although an incongruity in architecture, the tower formed a feature of no little interest. Not so with a line of building of modern Italian taste, raised on the site of the wing, which had been burnt down on Sir Roger's death. It connected itself with the stable-yard, and was intended for offices. But there was a disproportion and gaudiness about it which shocked the eye; and the stranger evidently regarded it with considerable disgust. And yet, on the whole, few English mansions were more striking than Hawkstone. Its green terraces sloped up the hill behind, and were connected with the house by balustrades and vases. In front, beneath a rough overhanging bank, lay a

small sheet of water, reflecting in that calm sunny afternoon every line of the building, its oriels glittering with the sinking sun, and the rich foliage which bent over it from the back. And at the corner of the tower lay a small square platform studded with parterres and vases in the old French taste, and commanded by a range of windows in the south front, to one of which, a richly wrought Gothic oriel with a small lancet adjoining, the stranger looked up, and gazed at it evidently with considerable emotion.

As he approached the house, he did not observe that there were marks of carriage-wheels on the broad gravel before the door, and that the great gates which opened into the stable-yard were open. The old housekeeper, who had been in the house ever since Lady Esther's time, and indeed had been her favourite maid, was very ill. And a young grand-daughter, to whom the stranger gave a note from Mr. Atkinson, the steward, led him timidly through the great hall hung round with pieces of armour and stags' heads, and through the ante-room and dining-room, with its oriel window and huge cumbered chimney-piece, and the retiring-room, which more modern taste had enlivened with gilded cornices and fretwork, now faded and dull. And there were pictures of mailed knights, and stiff ladies in ruffs and farthingales; and venerable old gentlemen in wigs and brocaded coats; and a few good busts; and in the library, a long, oak-wainscoted apartment, opening into various recesses, and dark with painted glass, there was a large collection of books, on which the stranger looked with evident satisfaction. The little girl could not, indeed, understand his movements. He seemed to open the doors as if he knew the house thoroughly. Before one or two pictures he stopped with earnest

interest. The others he passed by carelessly; and she endeavoured in vain to repeat some of the lore connected with them, which she had learned from her grandmother.

“Would he like to see the curiosities? the fine embroidered velvet pall, which had been brought from the Priory when it was pulled down, and which Sir Hildebrand, the sallow dissipated-looking man whose portrait, in the costume of Charles II.’s time, hung on the north side of the dining-room, had turned into a coverlet for his bed?” The stranger declined.

“Should she show him the great gilt cup, which was also brought from the same place, and which Sir Roger had in his hand, and was drinking out of it, at the very time when he was taken with the convulsions of which he died.” The stranger shook his head; he would go upstairs into the gallery, and look at the pictures there, and his little guide need not follow him. He would prefer looking at them by himself. And half-doubting, notwithstanding Mr. Atkinson’s guarantee, if she might trust him there without her, and looking back wistfully, as he ascended the grand staircase, she took her bunch of keys, and proceeded to reclose the doors of the rooms through which they had passed. At the top of the staircase a pair of folding doors, with pillars and richly carved capitals, opened into the long gallery, ceiled with stucco-work, and lined with portraits, and furnished with old cabinets and curious encoignures, and high-backed ebony chairs and marble tables, all of which the stranger passed unnoticed. His eye was fixed on a door at the end of it, which he seemed rather surprised to find ajar. He opened it gently, very gently, almost as if he was afraid of disturbing some one within. It was a large lofty room, hung with tapestry, containing a

heavy-carved bed, heavy-carved wardrobes and cabinets, old worked chairs, and a toilette laid out with a rich silver apparatus for a lady's use ; and over the fireplace was a full-length portrait of a lady also. It was the bedroom of Lady Esther. And as she looked down from the picture on the cold melancholy apartment, herself all radiant with youth, and beauty, and the brilliancy of her bridal attire, the contrast seemed too painful to the stranger. He turned to a smaller portrait, only half finished, in which the same high noble countenance, but marked with lines of care and sorrow, was bending over a young child, and watching him with tears in her eyes, as he lay sleeping, not on her bosom, but in the arms of a nurse ; and the tears came into the eyes of the stranger likewise — tears which fell faster as he stood by the side of the bed. For the last time he had been in that room it was darkened, and hung round with funeral lights ; and he had been brought there, awe-struck and wondering, to cast a last look on a gorgeous coffin ; and the time before that the room was also darkened, but, instead of the trappings of sorrow, there only lay upon that bed, covered decently with white, a pale, cold, unmoving figure, resting as it were from a great agony, and every line of sorrow softened into peace ; and the stranger well remembered his being lifted up upon the bed and giving a kiss ! — how chill and awful ! — to that marble forehead. And the day before that, he had been also brought into the same room by the old housekeeper, now lying ill ; and how well he recollected that hour. Years had passed away, but as he now stood by the bedside, the whole scene came back upon him with a vivid distinctness, which almost appalled him. There was the pale faint form of Lady Esther, supported by pillows, turning round longingly to the

door where he was expected to enter, and waving to have the curtains undrawn that the light might fall once more upon the face of her beautiful boy; and he had been wrapt in her embrace for minutes without either of them uttering a word, and he himself hearing nothing but the beating of her heart, and feeling a stream of tears falling on his face. And then she moved him from her, and turned him to the light, gazing on him with a look of sorrow and affection which he had never forgotten. And once more he was buried in her arms, and he heard prayer on prayer, faintly, yet all distinctly, poured over his head with the energy of a dying saint. She had made a sign, also, to her maid, to bring her something from a casket on the dressing-table; and whispering to him softly, "They will not prohibit this, they will not take this from you," she put round his neck with her own thin transparent hands a chain of her own hair, from which hung a plain little cross of gold; and the cross she put gently into his own hands, pressed them together, and looked up to heaven, and once more kissing his forehead with a long fervent kiss of blessing, she motioned to the servant that she could bear to part with him, and as she sunk back upon the pillow, he was taken out of the room.

Nor were these all the recollections of that chamber. No! almost ashamed of himself for their intrusion, he thought of days still earlier, and of very different occupations, when, as a child, he used to play by his mother's side in that same room, and make her show him the treasures of those silver boxes, and tell him stories; when he would sit at her feet, (there was the stool before him, just as it used to be, at the foot of the great ebony chair,) playing with his puzzle, or learning his lesson, or looking over picture-books; not alone, but with a

companion of his own age, or, as he always used to call her, his little wife, his cousin Eleanor. He dared not trust himself longer, but moved, with his arms crossed, to another door, which opened, seemingly, into a little sitting-room belonging to the suite. The curtains were closed, and it was nearly dark, but a door beyond was open, and a stream of rich light from the narrow lancet window fell beyond it into a small Gothic oratory, which had been fitted up for the use of Lady Esther. There was the richly wrought niche over the altar, containing a crucifix of the purest ivory; the canopied fan-like roof, the silver lamp, the illuminated Missal, the small gold candelabra, the footstool where Lady Esther used to kneel, all exactly as he remembered it when, as a child, he had been allowed occasionally to look into this sacred recess, where, several times a day, Lady Esther used to retire in the midst of even her most busy avocations, and where, since General Villiers had gone away to the Continent and taken her son with him, she spent the greater part of her time in prayer.

But the stranger saw none of these. For before the altar, her back towards him, and her head upturned as in a posture of the deepest devotion, there was a female figure kneeling, who did not hear his approach, and yet whose thoughts at that moment were full of him, were praying for him. It was Lady Eleanor. He could not doubt it. It was her tall, graceful form; the exquisite shape of her head, the slender neck. Even the dress he recognised; the same which she had worn when they parted, three months before, at Florence. What a meeting! He stood for a minute fixed to the spot, not astonished to see her, for he knew she was in the country, but amazed that their first meeting should be in such a place, so consecrated to the recollection of them

both. Gathering all his resolution to bear the meeting as he ought, he recollected himself sufficiently to endeavour to withdraw from intruding or disturbing her at such a moment. But the noise he made in moving roused her attention. As she turned round, she caught his figure retreating through the outer door, and, before she knew what she was doing, his name had escaped from her lips. In a moment he was at her side, on his knees before her, covering her hands with kisses ; and she, slightly endeavouring to withdraw them, was looking as if a load had been taken from her heart, and a long-hoped-for, long-delayed joy, a joy too great for utterance, had suddenly arrived. But it lasted only for a minute. His eye caught the crucifix over the altar, and he shuddered ; and dropping her hands and rising up before her, with an altered tone, which made the blood forsake her cheek, and leave on it a fixed look of disappointment and despair, he faltered out, "Forgive me ! forgive me, Lady Eleanor—I have no right—I am not master of myself. I am much to blame—I was not prepared to meet you. Forgive me for the intrusion. I did not know you were here."

"They told me," said she, faintly, "that you were in Yorkshire. I came here to see poor Collins, who is very ill, and wished to see me before she became worse."

"You have been," he said, "at Claremont, then, some days."

"Yes, my father came down on Saturday."

And there was a dead pause.

"And you will stay here, then, for the autumn?"

"Yes," she replied ; "perhaps all the winter."

They were silent again ; but Ernest was recovering himself.

"We shall meet, then ; we must meet often," he

said, with a firm but painful effort. And a slight gleam of hope came across her mind. "We shall see each other very often, as in old times."

"Yes," was her faint answer, and all hope had vanished, "as in old times."

"As friends?"

"Yes, as friends."

"Not as common friends?" said Ernest.

"No," she replied, for she also was gaining strength; "as very dear friends."

"As brother and sister?"

"Yes," was her answer, and her eyes filled with tears; "as brother and sister."

And once more he took her hand, and pressed it reverentially to his lips. But the effort was too much for her, and she sunk down in a seat, and cried violently.

He stood by her in silence, waiting for her feelings to find vent, and his own tears falling fast with hers. By degrees her emotion subsided, and she looked up, and stretched out her hand to him, which he took in both his own. "This is sad weakness, Ernest, sad weakness," she said; "but you will not think I wish it otherwise. Act according to your duty, as I would act by mine. Do not think me wicked enough to wish that you should tamper with your conscience. I mean,"—she corrected herself (for she knew how the word conscience is abused)—"with your faith, with your religion. Better for us both to be miserable, separate, than to be joined without God's blessing."

"Not miserable, dear Eleanor, not wholly miserable," said Ernest; "you will have your comfort, and God will give me mine. We cannot be miserable, you know" (and he vainly attempted to smile), "when we are doing His will."

"May God forgive me the words!" she said, and she lifted up her hands. "No, Ernest, we will not

be miserable. We can love each other, even now, as brother and sister."

"And we can pray for each other," said Ernest.

"Morning, and evening, and every hour," she exclaimed fervently. "O Ernest! if you knew ——" but here her voice failed. "Let us come out," she resumed soon, "out into the open air. This room is stifling."

And he gave her his arm, and, by a winding staircase at the corner of the tower, they made their way out on the terrace.

It was a still delicious hour. The birds were carolling in the trees, the waters glittering in the sunshine, the swans on the lake oaring their way in little fleets, the deer lying under the oaks with no footstep to disturb them. One solitary fleecy vapour was sailing gently across the setting sun. The flowers looked up, as they passed, as if delighted to waft their fragrance to them. The very air breathed like balm upon their heated foreheads, and Ernest, much as he loved at all times to dwell with nature, felt that he never before had known the power of its soft gentle music in lulling a troubled heart, where the heart was right with God. The turret clock struck four as they came out upon the terrace. It was five before they left it. Now that all hope was over, Eleanor, quieted and resigned, could almost talk to him as she used to talk; could begin to feel to him as she used to feel before she had ever thought of him except as a playmate and a brother. He asked for the good Abbé St. Maur, who was still at Claremont with the Earl. He spoke of foreign scenes, where they had travelled together. He even ventured to tell her much of what had passed since they parted at Florence, while still there was a lingering thought that he might yet be converted into the Romish commu-

nion, and thus claim Eleanor's hand on the only terms on which Eleanor, with all her love for him, would listen to his affection. And then he entered on his plans; told her why he had remained in Hawkstone privately, partly in his dread of meeting her until all his arrangements were settled, but chiefly that he might compare by himself the real circumstances of his two estates, and decide which he should part with, that he might reside entirely on the other.

"You know," he told her, and Eleanor looked up to him with a pride which she no longer attempted to disguise, "that I hold the possession of land a most solemn and responsible trust. A landlord is the king of the soil, and as a king, he cannot have a divided empire without doing injustice to one portion of it or the other. I have, therefore, resolved to sell my estates in Yorkshire. They are quiet, comparatively happy, compared with these; here, every thing is turbulent, and full of evil, I fear of serious danger. And I have chosen to station myself here, and by God's help, I hope to try what can be done in one little spot, at least, to save us from the iniquities, and follies, and approaching curses, of this unhappy land—done," he said, (and once more a pang went to Eleanor's heart, but he was resolved that, cost what it may, his decision should be definitively known,) "done as a Protestant may do it—as a devoted son of the English branch of the Holy Catholic Apostolical Church may hope to do, and may pray for God's blessings on his labours."

"May you have them, Ernest," was her only reply. "And you shall have my prayers, and you will give me yours?"

He said nothing, but pressing her hand led her to the carriage, which had just drawn up, and the meeting was over.

CHAP. XII.

THE carriage rolled away; turned down the sycamore avenue out of sight; and then it was, that Ernest felt the struggle which he had been making. The excitement was gone: the delight of seeing her, of walking by her, witnessing the purity and elevation of her thoughts, feeling that she loved him, though she could never be his—the consciousness that he was sacrificing himself to what he believed his duty—all seemed to vanish with her, and a cold dreary blank fell upon his heart. The very sun itself, and the bright landscape which had soothed him so before, now became melancholy and inanimate. The whole of life seemed stretched before him as a long, dreary, tedious waste. And more than once his resolutions failed; more than once an evil tempter whispered to him, that forms of faith were not essential to religion; that charity was the essence of piety; that opinions are not controllable, and, therefore, are not to be censured; that marriage is a civil ceremony, convenient and conducive to the tranquillity and morality of states, but that no solemn spiritual union is implied in it, which should prevent it from joining as one body those of different communions in spirit, or rather, a living member of the Church and one who was cut off from its fountain of life by heathenism, or heresy, or schism. Happily he had been well taught, and he repelled the suggestions manfully.

And now we must ask forgiveness for a long, a very long parenthesis, to interpret much that has passed, and all that is to come.

Some outline of Ernest's history the reader must have gathered already. He was the only child of Lady Esther: as such, and as heir to the large Villiers' property, he was reared up from his infancy in habits of command, which, but for the watchful care and discipline of his mother, would have moulded him into a little tyrant. He had within him the proud haughty spirit of all the Villierses. Around him he saw nothing but obsequiousness to his wishes, and a stiff ceremonious mode of life, not relaxed, but rather increased by the strict adherence of Lady Esther to the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. So long as he continued as a child under her care, his imperious disposition was kept down by her rigid but affectionate superintendence. But when the General, soured in temper by pecuniary embarrassments, and incapable of sympathising with her devotional habits, insisted on executing the miserable condition proposed at their ill-assorted union, of bringing up the boys in the religion of the father, and the girls under the wing of the mother, Ernest was taken from her, and placed first under a well-intentioned but injudicious tutor, who endeavoured to eradicate any seeds of Popery which might have been implanted by his mother's influence, and to form him to habits of religion by violent appeals to his feelings, and by continual theological controversy, which his mind was not capable of bearing; for few persons seem to understand, in the education of children, that the religious frame of mind, not the religious knowledge, is the effect to be sought for—that a child's religion consists not in quoting texts of Scripture, or in making long prayers,

but in reverencing, loving, and obeying the parents and teachers whom God has placed over them; in worshipping God through them and in them; and seeing Him dimly and faintly beyond them as a mystery, and only as a mystery, which gradually clears up into open day as obedience to His earthly representatives prepares the heart and soul for obeying Himself. Young as Ernest was, his feelings were chilled rather than warmed by these efforts to excite them. And with a sagacity common to children, he soon detected the latent weakness and even insincerity, which must exist, wherever there is an habitual forced effort to excite religious feeling by outward professions of it. He was, in fact, even as a child, disgusted with religion; and, if at any times he thought of it with pleasure, it was in the recollection of his mother — of the little simple hymns which he had learned at her knee, of her own unaffected devotions, of the prayers rather than the preaching which formed her religious exercises both by herself and with him, and especially of that tone of unhesitating, unsuspecting authority with which she always spoke, and which, he knew not how, seemed wanting in his tutor's admonitions.

From his tutor's he was sent to Eton. And at Eton, as he rose to the top of the school, his talents developed themselves gradually, and with them the imperiousness of his temper, which made him stand aloof from the rest of his companions, and confine himself to the society of one friend who was of a similar disposition to himself; and which soon brought him the reputation of a haughty and overbearing boy. And yet Ernest was not overbearing in the common sense of the word. To weaker boys he was kind and gentle; to the generality careless; to his superiors really haughty. His companions disliked him, and the masters could not understand

him. And there was only one occasion, a rebellion, on which he came forward prominently, and by a bold, independent act, which set all the school at defiance, prevented considerable mischief. But for the most part he lived alone; his walks were solitary, his reading generally at night, when others were gone to bed. He seldom joined in games; and when he did, it seemed to be as if in scorn of himself, though no one excelled him in any sport which he chose to undertake.

From Eton he came to Oxford. And still the same reserved and exclusive mood made him regarded with fear by inferior men, and with dislike by nearly all. The one or two friends, indeed, who were admitted to his rooms, spoke of him with enthusiasm. But when thrown into general society there was a sarcastic expression about his lips, a thoughtful irony in his language, and a gloominess on his brow, which repelled every approach. Gloominess, we said, for Ernest was far from happy. He had nothing to fill his mind. Ordinary follies and dissipations he had none, for he had too much pride. Against worse excesses he was saved by the daily and almost hourly recollection of his mother, whose picture hung over his fire-place, and who seemed, to his fancy, to embody the perfection of pure, delicate, dignified, and commanding woman. He made no effort to obtain any distinction; left competitors whom he might easily have vanquished to carry off prizes without rivalry, chalked out a line of reading for himself, and attended to his lectures only sufficiently to avoid censure. He always took his place in the class-room on one seat, rather out of sight, which no one else ventured to appropriate; and when a tutor spoke to him, he answered with a reserve which, without the slightest disrespect, discouraged all attempts to gain his confi-

dence. And in the mean time his imagination was running wild in an endeavour to find some realisation for dreams of ambition, and knowledge, and goodness, without which life seemed to him a waste. Around him all was mean and petty — meaner and pettier the more it was compared with the marks of giants' heads and giants' intellects stamped upon those remains of past generations, beneath the shade of which he was living. He saw statesmen succeeding to the helm of the greatest empire formed by man, and yet bowing to each gust of popular clamour, dreading to assert a truth or hazard a principle; hiding in false shame or falser fear the grandeur of their own destination, and breaking and frittering up a glorious system in vain attempts to purchase (from a mob) security for the superstructure by surrendering instalments of the foundation. Still nearer he beheld in his own university a congeries of grand incorporations armed with wealth, talent, influence, and dignity, capable of commanding the education of the country, of beating, as it were, almost as the heart and pulse of the British empire, and of spreading its arms to grasp on every side the command of all its moral movements; and yet no grand scheme of improvement — no organised resistance to the mischiefs which were gathering on the country — scarcely a recognition or sense of the awful responsibilities laid by Providence on the rulers of such a body, seemed to break the dulness and repose, in which the constituted authorities of Oxford clung to the narrow lines of existing associations and habits. "What," thought Villiers to himself, "what would Oxford have been made at such a crisis in the hands of Popery!" Nor, when he turned to his bookshelves, filled as they were at each return of the season with the newest publications, and searched through on each fresh arrival to discover some sa-

tisfaction to his longing after energy and power, did he find what he required. Novels, reviews, magazines, trumpery histories, autobiographies, Scotch metaphysics, and, still worse, Scotch æconomics, met him till he turned from them with loathing. Once he caught with delight at one of Carlyle's publications ; and plunged into a course of German studies, till here, also, he discovered the same hollowness, and vanity, and coldness, though masked under a more pretending mysticism. And his final refuge lay in the old and great writers of Greece, whose empire over the human mind he seemed to share, as he was enabled to stand by their side and to appreciate the justice of their conquests. From Philosophy (the step was necessary), he came upon Theology. And the controversy of the day, which brought before him as the one prominent object, the Image of the Church, seized at once upon his mind, and opened to his fancy all that he had so long been dreaming of. Here, then, was the power for which his heart was yearning, and for which all Nature seemed to cry aloud,—a power divine, though upon earth, bearing in its hands the keys of Truth, opening and closing at will the fountain springs of good and evil, swaying the hearts of men, and overruling the oscillations of their reason, and capable of binding into one the straggling elements of society, till all affections should be absorbed in one object, and every movement subdued to one law. It was a grand conception for a grand mind ; and from the moment that Villiers realised it, he became an altered being. A load seemed to have been taken from his breast ; the world wore a brighter aspect ; life had an object, and reasoning a foundation in truth. He could now venture to do what before he had often feared to do—to think and to inquire into the destinies of man and the Provi-

dence of God. And it was in this frame of mind, before he had time or opportunity to study the realisation of his idea in the history of the Church, and to penetrate deeply into the differences of the various communities of Christians, that he was summoned to join his father at Rome.

CHAP. XIII.

It was a warm and brilliant evening, about a month after his arrival there, that he stood on the steps which lead up to the Palace of the Senators : but not alone. With him, but a little retired behind him, and watching him with deep earnestness, stood a pale, calm, silent figure, in the garb of a Roman ecclesiastic. His thin lips were compressed in thought : his eyes, deep set, and filled with a singular lustre, were fixed on every movement of Villiers : his hands were not merely crossed on his breast, but clasped and folded, it seemed in prayer : and over all his face, on which high intellectual power and purity was stamped, there was spread a chastened yet ardent humility, strongly contrasted with the bold and commanding contemplativeness of his companion's eye. One seemed bowed down by a weight above him, beneath which he nevertheless moved with power and willingness, not without enjoyment : the other stood as lord and monarch of all around him, free and bold to move in any direction, to search into any mysteries, to mould every thing according to his will.

“ And this, then,” said Villiers after a long silence, “ this is the Capitol—the Capitol of Romulus and Numa, of Scipio and Marius, of Cicero and Augustus. And here, then, was the throne of the world ! ”

And as he turned to look upon the paltry modern edifices by which it is disfigured, a slight tinge of sarcasm fell from his look upon his companion.

“And there,” said his companion, stretching out his arm toward the dome of St. Peter’s, “there is the Capitol—the Capitol of Rome and of all Christians!”

“And where,” asked Villiers, “are its triumphs?”

“Not,” said his companion, and his eyes turned up to Heaven,—“not where our heathen triumphs have now passed for ever. Those which are gone are passed into heaven, and those which are upon earth are before you. Look,” he said, and pointed to a long procession of pilgrims (it was a year of jubilee) which was winding its way between the colonnades of St. Peter’s.

As Villiers turned to look at his companion, his eye met from him a steady, piercing, but sad and anxious gaze; and even his own proud spirit quailed before him. Neither of them spoke for some minutes; and the silence seemed scarcely broken by the deep and almost internal, thrilling, low voice with which the ecclesiastic asked him when he intended to leave Rome. Villiers felt that a fascination was upon him—how, or from whence, he scarcely knew—and he tried to break it by answering coldly, “In a week.” But the effort was vain.

“And you will go from hence,” said his companion, still in the same charmed voice, “to Athens?”

“Yes,” said Villiers; and he affected to answer as if he did not feel the spell. “I must tread the ground where Plato taught; where Socrates died; where Æschylus dreamed; and where the people that have subdued the minds of ages are now lying in the dust. Athens has been before me, as the first place of my pilgrimage, ever since I read the *Phædo*.”

“You have visited, then,” continued the eccle-

siastic, "the tombs of the Holy Apostles. You have studied all the wonders of that art, and the history of that wisdom, with which this place has enlightened the earth. Have you descended into the Catacombs?"

Villiers felt all that was meant, and simply answered "Yes."

"And from Athens," continued his companion in the same low unearthly voice, "you will go to Delphi, the oracle of the heathen world, to Egypt, to the Pyramids."

"I hope to do so," answered Villiers.

"To stand," continued his companion, "on the summit of mighty structures, on which the storms of ages have beaten, and beaten in vain; and to bring before your eye at one glance the mystery of time absorbed in eternity—of change coeval with immortality?"

"Such have been my thoughts," said Villiers."

"And such are mine," replied his companion. "But I need not quit this spot. Are we not at this moment at the Oracle of the Christian World—at the Pyramids of human empire—one and the same empire, whether its throne be placed on one side of the Tiber or the other?"

Villiers made no answer, but the thought struck deep; and his companion knew it, and refrained from disturbing it for some minutes.

"You are young," he continued at last: "who would have expected thoughts so deep from one so young? Have you ever thought that, as time may be swallowed up in eternity, and yet both co-exist together, so extension may be swallowed up, and space all but annihilated, and yet exist? You have railroads in England,"—and a faint contemptuous smile played on his cold lips: "are you not proud

of them, as triumphs over the greatest of fetters cast on man's soul by God, the fetters of space?"

"They are grand proofs," replied Villiers, "of the power and dignity of man."

"Yes," replied his companion; "to see beyond the vision of the eyes, to hear beyond the hearing of the ears, to stretch out our arms over the world, removing mountains and bridging oceans without moving from our place,—is not this ubiquity, and is not ubiquity an attribute of Deity? And so far as science and machinery enable man to realise this problem, so far they bring him nearer to the perfection of his nature. It is, indeed, a wonder. Look," he said, and he took from his pocket a packet of letters: "one post this morning has brought me letters from every quarter of the globe." And with calmness free from all ostentation he showed Villiers the post-marks on nearly twenty.

"Your correspondence is extensive," said Villiers. "Must you reply to them all?"

"They must be replied to," said his companion (and Villiers observed that he did not say "*I* must reply"), "to-day."

"I observed one," said Villiers, "from England; from a place well known to me—from Hawkstone. May I ask if you know any one there?"

The ecclesiastic slightly coloured, and, simply saying that his letter was accidentally put into the post there, he proposed that they should descend the steps of the Capitol and pass on to the Campo Vaccino.

The conversation of that hour sunk deep into the mind of the ambitious, thoughtful, imaginative Villiers. The next day and the next found him again with his friend, who had been introduced to him, soon after his arrival, as a countryman of his own belonging to the English College; and had con-

trived, without any appearance of intrusion, and as sought for rather than as seeking him, to become his daily companion. Without any seeming design, sometimes in the pursuit of amusement, sometimes in a plan of study, sometimes by accidental coincidences, Villiers found himself through the means of Macarthy brought into contact with all that could most engage the affections and stimulate the imagination in the papal city. All its ancient lore was even more familiar to Macarthy than to himself. When Villiers entered with avidity on an examination of its ruins, Macarthy seemed to have made them for years his favourite study. He carried him to unexplored recesses, illustrated half obliterated inscriptions, brought forth from an inexhaustible memory quotation on quotation ; and whenever Villiers was at a loss for a point of history, if Macarthy omitted for the time to supply the information, he was sure the next day to revert accidentally to it, and to show that he was master of that subject. Villiers did not know that the paleness of his cheek and thinness of his frame were due partially to the midnight studies with which he prepared himself to be in all points the assistant, and at the same time the master of his companion. The versatility and multiplicity of his talents (still without officiousness, or bustle, or ostentation, for Macarthy was discharging what he conceived a duty to his Superiors, not thinking of himself,) engaged even more the admiration of Villiers. If Villiers expressed an admiration for Dante, in a few days Macarthy would lead round the conversation to him, and pour forth stanza after stanza of his most exquisite poetry. If he proposed to devote a day to the sculptures of the Vatican, the morning slipped past unheeded, as Macarthy illustrated their history with anecdotes and theories of art. At one time

Villiers expressed an inclination to play billiards, and to his surprise, when after some days' delay Macarthy allowed him to find a table, and after some reluctance was induced himself to play, Villiers was beaten by him. One law Macarthy seemed to have laid down to himself. He never entered on any subject, nor took part in any pursuit, in which he was not Villiers' superior. Villiers was young; and the society of Rome at that time was gay and brilliant. Without any departure from propriety or clerical gravity, Macarthy did not hesitate to share it with him, and whatever attention was paid to the handsome, and noble, and wealthy Englishman, Macarthy was not long in any company without drawing the chief interest round himself, and bringing Villiers to stand beside him, the spectator and admirer of his power. But Villiers one day spoke with enthusiasm of the austerities of a monastic life; and by some seemingly natural and accidental circumstance, he was led to call on Macarthy late on a cold wintry night, and found him without a fire, with a single candle to light his studies, his solitary meal evidently untasted, and the door of his bedroom open, through which Villiers could not avoid seeing a rude hair shirt, not displayed, but apparently lying casually, ready to be put on. And let us do Macarthy justice. In all that he did, however calculated to raise himself in the eyes of Villiers, there was neither affectation nor selfishness. He was placed by those to whom he had sworn obedience, and whom he regarded in the place of his Heavenly Master, to play a part, to accomplish a work, and that work the fascination of Villiers: and as the whole powers of his mind were thrown into his duty, the affections of his heart became involved likewise. And Villiers could not have found in the world one who more

dearly loved him, or would have sacrificed for him more readily all that he valued, excepting only the one absorbing interest of his Society and his Church. He could not witness Macarthy's private devotions; but they were never uttered without prayers, and often tears, for him—prayers that he might one day be brought home to the bosom of what Macarthy deemed the true Church, and that Macarthy himself might be the instrument of his salvation. One night, when they were making an expedition in the Abruzzi, and were compelled to occupy the same room, Villiers was startled to hear his name repeated again and again in the disturbed dreams of his companion, in tones of affectionate anxiety, and mixed with entreaties for blessings on him, which went to Villiers's heart. At another time, as they were crossing a winter torrent in the mountains, Villiers's foot had slipped from a wet rock, and he was plunged headlong in the stream, incapable, from the fury of the waters, of exerting his powers of swimming. In a moment Macarthy was by his side, and by their joint efforts he reached the bank. From that day the charm was completed; and it began to work.

“How are you advancing?” was the question put soon after to Macarthy by the superior of his Order. “Why did you not bring him here last night, to see the washing of the feet of the pilgrims?”

Macarthy sighed, and answered, “that he 'had every hope of bringing Villiers over in time, but that his was not a mind to be dealt with rudely.” And while he uttered these words, something of pain and shame flushed across his face, as if, even in the conversion of a soul, trickery and artifice were unworthy either of man or of the Gospel. And, indeed, nothing but Macarthy's real and deep belief

in the rectitude of his own views, which gave warmth and sincerity even to his most elaborate manœuvres, could have prevented Villiers from detecting and revolting against his ingenious artifices.

At one time, Macarthy would take him to an hospital, where, among the sick and dying, instead of unfeeling hirelings taken from the lowest orders, he saw young and delicate women habited in a religious dress, and ministering with tenderness and devotion to the poorest sufferers. And as they came out, penetrated with the spectacle, Macarthy would ask, as if inquiringly, whether there was any thing of the kind in London, or, as he would correct himself, among the Protestant sects.

Another morning, the newspapers had brought word that some treaty of commerce had opened a port in China to European settlers. And scarcely a day elapsed before Macarthy called on Villiers, to tell him that he might now have an opportunity of witnessing the consecration of a bishop, which was to take place immediately. "We are sending out a bishop and seven missionaries to China," he said, quietly.

"So soon?" asked Villiers.

"And are we to leave the poor heathen a day," asked Macarthy, gravely, "without preaching to them the Gospel?"

"And how can you manage this?" asked Villiers. "In England, it would take years even to propose such a plan, much more to complete it."

"We have our colleges," answered Macarthy, "and devoted men always ready to go in bodies wherever they are sent. We are not under the crown."

And Villiers was silent, but he treasured up the fact. Oftentimes Macarthy would speak to him of his mother, as of one with whose character he was

familiar; and as the tears came into Villiers's eyes at the recollection of her sainted life and sainted death-bed, Macarthy would turn aside; and not in affectation or hypocrisy, but in deep unfeigned pain, would silently breathe a prayer, that the son might yet be restored to the communion of the mother; and Villiers understood his thoughts.

"Perhaps," said Macarthy to him one evening, "you had better not come to-morrow, as usual, to hear the music in our chapel. There is a commemoration of the dead; and one name you would hear mentioned in our prayers, which might affect you painfully. Lady Eleanor was a benefactress to our Order. And I fear," he continued, "you could not join with us in praying for her now."

It was almost the only bitter word which Macarthy had ever used, but it went to Villiers's heart.

At another time, when Macarthy perceived that his friend was suffering under depression of spirits, and with the acuteness habitual to his Order had discerned that there was something on his mind — some remorse which required to be calmed — Macarthy led him through a church by a confessional, where a penitent was kneeling. Something induced him to stop to look at a piece of sculpture, and to decipher a long inscription; and, as he glanced round to observe Villiers, he saw that the shaft had struck him. They left the church, neither of them speaking: not a word passed till they found themselves in the open Campagna, beneath the solitary sky; and, as Macarthy sat down to rest himself on the fragment of an old ruin, Villiers, with a deep groan, knelt down before him; and, hiding his face in his lap, entreated him to hear his confession. A by-stander might have observed a look of joy and exultation in Macarthy's lustrous eye pass into

tenderness and sorrow, almost into a tear, as he bowed his head down upon Villiers, and prayed God to bless him; but he knew too well the art of fascination.

“No,” he replied, to Villiers. “I understand you; I know your wants; I mourn for you; but I cannot give you relief. Your faith, if so it may be called, repudiates that holy sacrament, cuts you off from that blessing to penitent sinners, and you must bear the burden; I cannot relieve you. If you need confession, and can conscientiously receive absolution, you should have recourse to your own clergy. There is Mr. De Courcy, who preaches at your chapel.” And he named a young, gay, fashionable clergyman, who nominally under the pretext of his health, but in reality to indulge his amusements, affected to take the spiritual charge of the English residents at Rome, by reading prayers to them on a Sunday, and rehearsing a sermon of Blair’s.

No physician watching the crisis of a deadly disorder ever studied so deeply each shade of symptom; touched so delicately on every spring which could work a favourable change, gave himself up so completely to the perplexities of a varying and complicated disease, as Macarthy, preserving all the time a profound silence on any point of controversy, watched over Villiers. Villiers had launched one day with enthusiasm into the vision of an empire placed in the hands of one great mind, unshackled by the fetters of a popular government, and devoted with honesty and self-devotion to the good of mankind. The same afternoon, Macarthy stopped in their walk at the gate of one of the colleges in Rome; and, after some little delay, they were led into a small cell. The stone floor simply matted over, the single wooden chair, the simple deal table

covered with papers and books, the image of the Virgin under a niche, with a lamp burning before it, and the fireless hearth, even in the midst of winter, were familiar to Villiers ; and he felt no surprise. But he was not prepared for the noble and almost awful figure of the occupant of that humble apartment ; for the command with which he raised himself from his seat, and bestowing no look on Macarthy, who stood trembling in his presence, pointed to a map of the earth before him, and with his eyes fixed upon Villiers — “Beware,” he said, “young man ; remember that it is nothing to gain the whole world, and to lose your own soul.” He then waved his head for them to withdraw ; and Villiers learned from his still awed companion, that he had seen the general of the Jesuits.

There were many Germans at Rome ; and Villiers, who did not understand the German language, endeavoured to converse with them in Latin.

“Oh !” sighed Macarthy, “if but one language could be spread over the whole world, to unite us all together in our devotions as in our converse, would it not be a blessing ? Would it not almost repeal the curse of Babel ?”

They spent morning after morning before the works of art, with which every palace in Rome is filled ; and while other curious visitants passed rapidly through the galleries, some chatting idly on common matters, others scanning, with absurd pretensions to criticism, the grandest works of the great masters of painting and sculpture, and others lounging lazily on sofas to gaze, through opera-glasses, on the sufferings of saints, and admire the anatomy of the muscles in the form of a crucified Redeemer, Macarthy would draw Villiers apart, and fix him before some figure of the Blessed Virgin ; tell him how in its softness and its dignity it

was a type of the Church ; and, as he watched the picture, drawing into itself, by degrees, the thoughts and affections of his companion, Macarthy asked himself how any system of religion could rule the heart of man which did not appeal to his imagination through his senses. With great care and judgment he withdrew Villiers from the popular spectacles of religious ceremonies, and from every thing which could suggest to him the too painful system of artifice and deception with which Popery amuses and controls its followers. He showed him no relics ; led him through no tawdry churches ; carefully prevented his reading any popular books of devotion ; spoke soberly and sadly on some impostures, which at the time were claiming to be miracles ; and only on one occasion had committed a mistake, when Villiers had remarked with some severity on the exhibition of a dirty doll hung round with beads, and crowned with paper flowers, before which a crowd of market-women were paying their devotions. He had made a faint apology for it—the usual apology of Popery—*Populus vult decipi, et decipiatur*. But the indignant and astonished look with which Villiers turned round to see if he were speaking seriously,—his demand to know whether God has given to the Church commission to deceive,—to do evil that good might come,—to rule by lies,—as they startled Macarthy himself, threw him also on his guard ; and though the principle had been laid deep in his own mind by the whole system of his religious education, he never broached it again. But to one spectacle in particular did Macarthy accompany his companion. It was the ceremony of the Pope's blessing the people in the great area before St. Peter's : and as the venerable old man rose from his seat over the grand entrance, and the multitude fell down before him hushed into

the profoundest silence, Macarthy felt Villiers kneeling by his side, and kneeling even after the cannon from St. Angelo had broken the trance, and the shouts and cries of the struggling crowd around them had dispelled the magic of that wondrous scene. But Macarthy did not lose the opportunity. The next day, as they parted, he left in Villiers's hand a note-book, closely and carefully written through.

"Yesterday," he said, "we both were kneeling side by side, I to receive the blessing, and you, I trust and believe, not scornfully resolved to reject it, of a poor old man. You think," he continued, "that the whole was a delusion. And, if you did not love me, you would despise me for becoming the slave of such an imposture as the papal supremacy. This is the language of Protestants. I do not like that you should despise me. I have therefore brought together in this book the testimonies of antiquity, —of Catholic antiquity," he repeated, —"to the truth of our doctrine ; and, perhaps, you would like to look at them."

The next morning Villiers received a note from him, to say that he was called away suddenly from Rome. Days passed, weeks passed, two months passed, and Macarthy did not appear or write. He had planted the seed securely, and he was too wise to stand by and disturb the process of germination. Villiers himself, with the departure of his companion, disappeared from the general society of Rome. He was intently occupied, in the mornings, in the libraries to which he could gain access, in his solitary walks involved in abstracted thoughts, and far beyond midnight his lamp was seen burning in his room, till his countrymen of the Piazza di Spagna spoke of him as a prodigy of learning, or as a recluse soon likely to be involved in the net of Popery. One only Englishman might be seen with

him at times, climbing feebly the steps of the Piazza, for he was just recovering from a long illness. And as the passers-by saw him, with Villiers's assistance, mounting the acclivity, and observed his sunken cheek and glassy eye, they marked him as one who would add another to the victims of the stranger's burial-ground. He was a clergyman of middle age, bearing no marked character upon his features or figure, quiet, equable in temper, resigned and cheerful, as one whose past life had neither been ruffled by great shocks of sorrow, nor stained by memories of evil, and whose knowledge, accurate and sound rather than universal, had been obtained by a patient, steady, undeviating course of study, in which he was seeking not for the display of talent, or the satisfaction of a presumptuous curiosity, but to prove and develope truths which he had already embraced heartily under the teaching of his Church. In this good, simple-minded, sensible man, a type of the character of the English Church in general, Villiers became deeply interested. His perfect simplicity, his freedom from effort, his abstinence from all attempts to display himself or to influence others, the tranquillity with which he retired unnoticed in society, and the openness, not without thoughtfulness and discretion, with which he spoke in private, fell upon Villiers with a degree of novelty and freshness. It was a relief after the depth and brilliancy which had marked the conversation of Macarthy ; and from the profound carefulness with which his every movement seemed to have been regulated, as if some design and object lay beneath each action. But there were other bonds of union between them, and each week more and more time was spent by them together ; and as Beattie's health improved, before tables thickly strewed with books, till the day which brought to Villiers a letter from

Macarthy. It was short, but ardent and affectionate. He apologised for not writing before, by the pressure of business ; made no allusion to any thing which had passed between them, and only hoped that he should see Villiers as soon as he arrived in Rome ; or that, if he had left Rome, Villiers would carry with him, wherever he went, the remembrance of one who dearly loved him. Villiers's brow worked painfully as he cast his eyes over the letter. He was in Beattie's room, immersed with him, as usual, in a pile of folios ; and as he laid the letter down, and rested his face upon his hands, Beattie looked up quietly, and saw by the close pressure of his fingers that he was engaged in some internal struggle. At last he recovered himself, and simply saying that it was a letter from Macarthy, who would be in Rome next week, he resumed his writing.

On that day week, Macarthy arrived in Rome. If any one had imagined from his absence or his silence that he had lost sight of Villiers, he would have done him grievous injustice. His absence had been contrived for the very purpose of giving free unsuspected scope to the working of the suggestions which he had made to him. A double time had been allotted to the prayers in which he entreated a blessing upon his labours, and as he fondly deemed it, upon the head of his friend, by his restoration to the unity of the Church. His asceticism was increased ; his voluntary penances made more severe. And though, too often, a chill and deadness of feeling hung upon him, as if his devotions would be unheard, at times he mistook the excitement and enthusiasm of overwrought sensibility for a divine inspiration within, and solaced himself already with the thought of embracing his friend, as his own work, and as such, adding him

as a worthy conquest to the triumphs of his idolised Society. His heart beat as he entered the gates of Rome. It throbbed quicker, under an outward veil of perfect composure, as he ascended the staircase to his apartment, almost expecting that Villiers would be there to meet him. But the room was empty, the evening past, and Villiers arrived not. The next day came, and though Macarthy remained within, listening to every step that approached his door, it closed in blankness and disappointment, and all his dreams seemed vanished. And yet, in what way an honest ardent mind like Villiers's, bent upon simple truth, and ready from inclination to receive it, could escape from the overwhelming evidence which Macarthy believed that he had placed before him in favour of the fundamental article of his own religious creed, it was hard to imagine. Should he go himself and seek Villiers? But Macarthy was too proud to seek, where he desired to be sought, and too prudent to risk repulsion by an officious over-zealous attempt to attract. The third morning relieved his anxiety in some degree. It brought him a little note, simple, and cold, and avoiding even the usual formal expressions of regard—to say, that if Macarthy was disengaged, Villiers would come to him that evening; and he did come. But, from the first moment of his appearance, Macarthy saw that all his feelings were changed, and that something had occurred to break the spell of his own personal influence over him, and that Villiers was no longer his captive. The formal apology, the hand laid coldly in his own, and suffering motionless the pressure of Macarthy's—a pressure which Macarthy instantly checked—sufficiently told the tale of some secret estrangement. Macarthy's pride came at once to cover his disappointment, and enabled him

to meet the cold and severe look of Villiers with equal reserve and self-possession.

"I am come, Mr. Macarthy," said Villiers, and his voice faltered as he said Mr., and something of his former tenderness seemed returning, — "I am come to replace in your hands a little book, which you were good enough to trust me with before you left Rome. You intended, I am well aware, that I should study it thoroughly, and I hope, therefore, you will excuse me if I have interleaved it, and added to it suggestions and corrections of my own." And as he placed the volume in Macarthy's hand, and met Macarthy's eyes, surprised, and yet unflinchingly fixed to meet his, some misgiving arose in Villiers's mind as to the justice of his severity. Macarthy said nothing, but opened the book. He found it, indeed, interleaved, interlined, filled with MS. notes in Villiers's handwriting, and with references, which had evidently been drawn from a very deep and extensive course of reading.

"And is there," said he, "any thing in this book, Mr. Villiers, which should have worked the change which I cannot but perceive — any thing which should destroy our former regard for each other? It was drawn up with a very different intention."

"I do believe it," replied Villiers; "I cannot have been insensible to your anxiety, a well-meant but ill-regulated anxiety, to win me over to your own form of religion. I neither complain nor condemn. It is a good and a Christian zeal, when conducted with reverence for truth; but I do lament, lament bitterly, Macarthy, that you should have endeavoured to convert me, even to what you believe to be the truth, by an imposture."

Macarthy's colour leaped into his face, and he half started from his chair, but sat down again, con-

fronting Villiers with an open indignant look which demanded explanation.

"May I ask," said Villiers, "if this collection of authorities and testimonies to the doctrine which you desire to impress on me was compiled by yourself from the original writers?"

"It was made," said Macarthy, "as I intended to express at the time I gave it to you, from our own controversialists. I wished you to see the line of argument which they adopted, and the evidence on which they proceeded."

"And you have never verified them yourself?" said Villiers.

"I have not," replied Macarthy; "I have myself faith in my teachers, and am willing to accept their statements. It is our practice, and our first lesson, to discard doubt in the honesty and correctness of those who are placed to rule over us."

"And as a collection from your controversialists you gave it to me?" said Villiers.

"Most assuredly," replied Macarthy. "I never imagined that you would mistake it for any thing else, or myself for a man of so much learning."

Villiers's face in a moment resumed all its old cheerfulness and affection. "I have done you wrong, Macarthy, a grievous wrong; but you must forgive me;" and he stretched out his hand, which Macarthy met and took, but did not press, for he was offended as well as amazed.

"I did you a grievous wrong, dear Macarthy," continued Villiers, "and I must make a full reparation for it."

"May I ask first," said Macarthy, "for an explanation of this rather singular conduct?"

"Macarthy," said Villiers, "when I first took up your volume, I was overpowered with the accumulation of evidence which it brought to bear on your

favourite dogma. I found an array of names, whose authority it was impossible to dispute ; distinct enunciation of the doctrine from the earliest times, which no art could misinterpret ; and quotation on quotation which, it seemed clear, no opposite testimony could overcome, or even balance. For one day you had conquered me. But I happened to return to it, and to light on a passage quoted from St. Cyprian, a striking and overwhelming testimony, as you have there extracted it, to the papal supremacy. A copy of St. Cyprian was lying, may I not say providentially, by me, and I turned to the passage in the original. What was my astonishment to find that the words on which necessarily turned the whole propriety of the application of his expressions to the See of Rome were acknowledged as a well-known interpolation even by the Romanist editor, and were carefully excluded from his text, — the very text, remember, to which your reference was given.”

Macarthy's eye continued firmly facing Villiers ; and he proceeded : “ One discovery,” he said, “ of this kind induced me to examine further, — to examine laboriously and honestly, and not without assistance, but with a single desire to discover truth. And shall I tell you the result ? ”

Macarthy begged him to proceed.

“ I found,” said Villiers, “ that nearly every important passage was garbled in the same manner, and in the face of direct warnings against the corruptions, which corruptions it was impossible to doubt had been originally fastened upon the text by papal transcribers and editors. I found that other passages which were not garbled were yet wholly misapplied — that what the ancient Fathers had spoken of the whole Catholic Apostolic Church, without any restriction to the branches in communion with the Bishop of Rome, was employed as if those epithets

had been used, as you abuse them now, exclusively to designate your own peculiar branch. I found that spurious documents were appealed to as genuine ; and obvious interpolations of whole sentences admitted without a hint or warning. I catalogued the list of authorities, and affixed their dates, and to my astonishment discovered the art with which ancients and moderns—Fathers of the Catholic Church and doctors of the Romish schools—were mixed together, to present an overwhelming catena of testimonies, out of which but two or three were valid, as legitimate evidence. And when I compared the real accounts of the constitution of the Church in the ages which we are bound to follow with your own description of them, I could find little but direct contradiction. Pardon me, Macarthy, if, as I read this compilation of forgeries and deceptions, (for I can call it little else,) and imagined you to have been the author of it, and this for the purpose of inducing me to embrace a system of religion based upon this one foundation, I did resent it, and did forget all that I had formerly felt for you. When we have been deceived in one point, we suspect deceit in all. Before this, others endeavoured to persuade me that pious frauds were an essential part of your system. But I never could willingly believe it. And when once there fell from your lips that hateful maxim, *Populus vult decipi, et decipiatur*, I persuaded myself that you were speaking in irony. May I believe so still, and that your controversialists alone are responsible for this cheat ?”

Macarthy did not look up. A slight pang crossed him as he felt that the maxim so hateful to Villiers had been uttered by him, not in irony, but in sober seriousness ; and that if the imposition, of which he had been the unintentional aider, was gross and enormous, it was still in perfect consistency



with the principles of that dominion over men by human arts, though for religious purposes, which his life was devoted to maintain. But the shock to his mind was great. He received the book, carefully locked it up, and then taking Villiers's hand, "I never intended to deceive you," he said, simply: "are we friends again?"

And the pressure of Villiers's hand showed that his confidence was restored.

CHAP. XIV.

BUT in Macarthy's own mind confidence was not restored. Villiers from that hour made no attempt to resume the subject. Whatever fascination had been previously thrown round him by the apparent grandeur, unity, and splendour of the Romish system, the discovery of the hollowness and vanity of its fundamental assumption, and of the artifices with which it was supported, had dispelled the whole illusion. He now walked the streets of Rome almost with loathing, as a scene of imposition pitiable and pardonable in the deceived, but frightful and impious in the deceivers. As he examined the doctrinal errors of its system, he could detect in all of them the element of popular influence which the lust of rule required, and to which, and not to truth, it clung with such vigorous tenacity. And as he read the history of modern days, and especially of his own country since the Reformation, he could enter with heartier sympathy into the struggles, and compassionate with more indulgence the errors, of the minds by which, in one portion of the globe, popery had been resisted and exterminated, though not without loss. But theology, as yet, had been taken up by him only as a theory—as a vision for the imagination; and when the first vision which he had formed broke up before his eyes, he was left in a state of dreary doubt and coldness, without any foundation on which to rest — any positive system, either to realise in himself, or to inculcate upon others. The thought, therefore, of bringing Mac-

arthy from error never occurred to him ; and even if it had occurred, the natural delicacy of his mind would have shrunk from obtruding on a task to which he was not called, and for which he possessed little fitness. Even if he had undertaken it, what, according to his then views, could he offer Macarthy in exchange for the system which he would abandon, and which, false and hollow as it was, was still a splendid falsehood ?

In the mean while Macarthy's own mind was working upon itself. It is not true that the quarrels of friends are the renewal of friendship. Friendship is a delicate plant, and every rude touch, though it does not uproot, shakes and mars it. And the suspicion and resentment once felt by Villiers, though cast away at Macarthy's frank declaration, had left the shade of an evil association with his name, which, unreasonable as Villiers confessed it to be, he could not altogether dispel. Their intercourse became less frequent ; and Macarthy himself pleaded occupation and study in excuse for it. And when they did meet, Villiers was pained to see a marked alteration in his manner and appearance. He became gradually reserved and silent ; his mind was apparently engaged in abstracted and anxious thought ; and his eye was restless, and no longer possessed of that singular power of penetration with which he used to fascinate those with whom he conversed. Lines of care began to mark his countenance. From a frank, open apology of occupation, he seemed driven to find excuses for avoiding a meeting with Villiers. If he came to him, it was late in the evening ; and in the day-time he never walked with him, as before. When Villiers called on him, he evinced impatience and anxiety for his departure. And at last, after having been informed several times by the porter that Mr. Macarthy was not within, Villiers received

an embarrassed note from himself, pleading that he was peculiarly circumstanced at present, and must deny himself the pleasure of seeing him so often. Villiers, of course, acquiesced, with some surprise, and still more of offended pride. In his thoughts he charged Macarthy with foolish resentment at the refutation which had been given to his polemical theories. Alas ! he little knew the misery which he had caused to him, and the fiery trial through which he was now passing. Weeks had passed without his seeing him, when, on sending once more to know if Mr. Macarthy was in Rome, an answer was given that he had left it, and would not return for some little time ; and Villiers gave up all hope of seeing him, and prepared himself for his journey to Naples. He was to depart the next morning. But before he quitted the Eternal City, he gave himself up to spend one more evening among its ruins, to stand once more by moonlight on the steps of the Capitol, to listen once more, in the cool silence, to the plashing of the fountains among the colonnades of St. Peter, and to sit once more on the topmost range of the Colosseum—that image of the fortunes of Rome—that concentration of its wonderful history, and still more wondrous character.

The moonlight was streaming in masses through the dark piers of that gigantic structure. The distant hum of the corso scarcely reached his ear as he ascended to a favourite point, from which his eye could command the whole area. There was the enormous pile, reared by human art to gratify the meanest craving of an enormous ambition. There was the ground polluted with the blood of hireling gladiators, to slake that thirst for excitement, that avidity for power, which converted even the theatre of Rome into a butchery and charnel-house. There was the scene of martyrdom ; and Villiers blessed

himself that the day of persecution had passed for ever, till he remembered the Inquisition. He sat immersed, not in thought, but in a dreamy, melancholy, trance-like stupor, under the immediate presence and eye, as it were, of an awful spirit, which seemed to fill and haunt the ruins. And he heard no step behind him till he was touched on the shoulder, and a low hollow voice sounded in his ear, "Villiers—dear Villiers!"

He turned round, and, disguised and enveloped in a large cloak, he saw Macarthy. As the moon emerged from a cloud and fell upon his face, Villiers was shocked, and startled to see its haggard cast and ashy hue. It was the image of secret anguish; and every trace of coolness and resentment vanished from Villiers's mind in compassion.

"You are ill," he said, "Macarthy; how came you here at this hour? They sent word to me, only yesterday, that you had left Rome."

"Did they?" said Macarthy. "I knew nothing of it; but, thanks be to Heaven, I am here. I have escaped them. Only you are yourself in danger. This is no safe place," he said, looking round him, "for any one, much less for us. These dark passages and cells have a bad reputation; and two men were stabbed in them last week."

Villiers knew it, but he was fearless.

"I could not leave Rome," he said, "without once more coming here by moonlight. But you are ill, Macarthy, dear Macarthy; what is the matter?"

"Not ill," replied Macarthy, "not ill, only in torment. But I have borne it. I have gone through the worst; and if I can but breathe another air, I shall be well."

"And what have you suffered?" said Villiers.

"It is a long tale," replied the other, "and I have but a few moments. Hush!" he continued,

"we are observed. Did you not see a figure moving round that corner?"

Villiers looked, but all was still.

"There are two of us," he said; "and we can have given no cause of offence to any one. Be not alarmed."

Macarthy drew breath more freely, but proceeded in a low voice, almost in a whisper—

"You," he said, and his voice faltered tenderly—"you whom I loved so dearly, whose name has been in all my prayers, the thought of whom has been the last to soothe me at night and to wake me in the morning,—you whom I have sought to make my own, until I have at times forgotten my God,—you have been my destroyer!"

Villiers looked up with amazement.

"You have made me," Macarthy continued, with a sepulchral voice, "an Infidel. No," he continued, after a pause, and drawing himself up once more to stand as he used to stand when he would command and rivet his hearers, "not an Infidel. Thanks to my God, thanks to better thoughts and prayer, I have not lost all. Something is true within me in what we have learned and felt of Christianity: but what, or how much, or where, or how it may be found, I know not. I cling to it as to a flitting shadow, which I expect will every moment vanish also from my grasp; and but one thing on earth am I sure of—that Popery is a lie; and they know that I know it; and I have been in their hands." And Villiers shuddered at the tone of mingled terror and loathing with which Macarthy uttered his last words.

"I have been in their hands, Villiers," he continued; and he bared his arm, and Villiers saw that it was blackened and almost paralysed as by some dreadful torture.

"They found my book—your book," he said. "They watched my reading as I followed it. They had their confessional; they wrung from me every thought of my heart. I had been their chosen minister, in the possession of their secrets. Judge, Villiers, if they would spare me!"

And he again looked trembling behind him to catch a creaking sound, which seemed like a step creeping stealthily along the dark vaulted passage at his back.

"Move out," he said to Villiers, "into the open air. It is better in the light."

"And how, then, are you here?" asked Villiers.

"I have been bound down," he said,—“solemnly and awfully bound down; and one voice was raised to save me, or I should not be here. But I am escaped from them—escaped for the present, though every movement is watched. I saw you from the wretched place where I have taken refuge for the time, and traced you here to wish you farewell,—to tell you that you may think of me when I am gone. But it is at the peril of my life. As you value it, do not come near me, nor write to me. You are yourself in danger, and should leave Rome without delay."

"And why not leave it with me?" asked Villiers.

"I cannot," said Macarthy; "I am bound hand and foot, and dare not stir. And if I could escape, where am I to go?"

"To England," said Villiers, "to your own country, with me."

"And what could I do there?" said Macarthy.

"Our church," said Villiers, "is open to you. We do not deny your orders."

"No," said Macarthy, "you do not deny our power to minister; but will you, can you, trust to

us to minister, at least for years, till you have tried us ; and meanwhile—hark again, surely that was a footstep ?”

And Villiers advanced to look into the dark passage, but all was still and silent, and only the hooting of a solitary owl broke the breathless calm that reigned around them. The unhappy man sunk down and buried his face with his hands, till Villiers once more suggested his endeavouring to reach England.

“England !” said Macarthy, “where the prisoner is freed by the very touch of the soil on which he stands ! England, the refuge of the world !” And he seemed to revive at the thought.

“And our church,” repeated Villiers, “is still open to you.”

“Yes,” muttered Macarthy, “if it be true. And if truth be found upon earth, I would fain hope that it is there, though at present all is dark around me. I can believe in nothing. I can only suspect and disbelieve ;” and he heaved a deep groan. “Life and the world, and earth and heaven, are all a blank.”

“Will you not examine further and inquire ?” asked Villiers, tenderly.

“Inquire !” cried Macarthy, with a bitter laugh of irony. “Have I not inquired once ? And what has been the end ?”

And then, after a pause, he resumed, as if the possibility of so doing had dawned upon him.

“And if I could inquire, where should I be meanwhile ? Outcast, degraded, despised ; rejected with suspicion by those to whom he comes, and persecuted even to the death by those whom he abandons ; his heart broken ; his mind distracted—friendless—without books—without support or guidance—shut out even from the channels of aid

from God, if such there be ; starving, perhaps, and destitute of all things ;—you bid the wretch whom you have shaken from his faith and tempted to your own—you bid him inquire ! Villiers, is it not a mockery ? Do you remember,” said Macarthy, after a long silence, “do you remember that miserable man” (and he alluded to a case which they had witnessed), “the apostate priest ? Do you recollect his shame and his sins, when he was driven from the shelter of his Church, and exposed naked and defenceless to the temptations of the world, which he had never known before ? Why should not my end be like his ?” And he sprang up in desperation, and stood trembling on the very verge of the precipitous wall, till Villiers seized his arm, and, entreating him to be calm, reminded him of the hour and scene when his own life had been saved by Macarthy’s arm.

“Can you,” he said, looking stedfastly into his distracted eye—“can you speak of poverty, and destitution, and friendlessness, while I am living ?”

Macarthy’s pride, controlled and subdued as it had been by his former position, in which the grandeur of the body of which he was a member compensated for the humiliation of the individual, had now resumed its sway, and almost scornfully he withdrew his arm. “I cannot,” he said, “be dependent even upon you.” But, recovering himself, he continued : “One thing there is which you might do, and which I could accept without shame. You might procure me admission for a time to one of your colleges.” And his eye turned up in hope as the thought struck him. “There I might be safe for a time, and at peace ; and there, with the necessary help, I might perhaps—once more—” he stopped—and then added faintly, “inquire.”

Villiers did not understand him, and looked at him for an explanation.

"Our colleges?" he asked.

"Yes," said Macarthy, "you have literary colleges, where there are libraries, and religious services, and good associations, and discipline, and shelter from temptation, and learned men, and means of living with quiet and respectability at least, upon comparatively humble means. Ours are always open to receive any converts from your faith to ours: they are admitted to a shelter immediately; and in that awful crisis which must take place in the transition from one communion to the other, they are nursed, and watched, and disciplined, until they are strong enough to return once more into the world. You must have such refuges in England; and in them I might still be saved."

"Alas!" said Villiers, mournfully, "I know of none such. Colleges, indeed, we have, wealthy and numerous, but they have not been used for such a purpose; perhaps they could not be."

"Not one?" asked Macarthy again, "not one? not a single place of refuge for the miserable beings whom you are daily almost execrating for remaining in popery, and calling on them as their only salvation to come over to your Church? And do you thus cruelly endeavour to break down the roof and walls of the home in which they are sheltered, and to turn them adrift and naked upon the world without caring where they go? And when they come and sit down before your own doors, craving for some shed to cover them, you bid them wait and inquire. Oh, Villiers, can this be the Church of England — of England, the merciful and the wise?"

Villiers sighed deeply, but could make no reply.

"Then," said Macarthy, after a lengthened silence, "all is lost." He started up and listened, as a fragment of stone detached from the wall fell down in

the dark passage through which they had passed, and both fancied they heard a suppressed cough.

"Come," said Macarthy, "let us separate. I have been followed and watched for days; and to be seen with you might ruin me."

"And why?" asked Villiers.

"Because," replied Macarthy, "I know all their designs upon you. Beware, Villiers, how you trust to any one. Leave Rome immediately. At Naples—even in England—even in the farthest part of the globe, remember that there is a power seated here which has a thousand eyes and a thousand arms, and can walk the earth invisibly, working its will at any moment and in any place; and its eyes are fixed on you."

Villiers understood the allusion, for he knew that Macarthy was a Jesuit. But why he should himself be their object he could not imagine.

"Are you not aware," said Macarthy,—“can you have been so long in Rome, so long with me”—(and he groaned again), “without seeing the intense avidity with which every Englishman of rank and influence is brought within the range of their fascination? Upon England their eyes are fixed as on the one great hope of restoring their empire. Every concession to an insane toleration, every popular movement, every trembling and shaking of the boughs of the English Church, every foreign alliance or foreign commerce which threatens either the downfall of the old English antipapal system, or the revival of a papal influence, they watch and foster with an art which almost defies detection, but insures success. Your name is on the list of those from whom it hopes much. Your mother’s memory, your last associations at Oxford, and all which they have witnessed in you here, have marked you as their victim. Beware of every one. Beware”—

But before the word was finished, there was a rush behind. Macarthy staggered and fell into the arms of Villiers; and before Villiers could disengage himself, a figure, muffled up, leaped past him into one of the deep dark passages on the other side. Villiers sprung after him, and all but grasped his neck, but with a tremendous effort the assassin shook him off, shot down the steps, and disappeared in the labyrinth. Villiers rushed back to find Macarthy bathed in blood, and stretched dead upon the ground. His arms were crossed as if his last thought had been prayer. But the dagger had reached his heart, and life had fled.

CHAP. XV.

As the spring of that year came on, the loiterer on the Chiaia at Naples might have observed, day after day, at a certain hour, an English carriage drawn up before one of the principal houses on that delicious suburb. After delays, often very capricious, a little, thin-visaged, mean-looking old man, with a soured and fretful countenance, would be assisted into it by his valet for his morning drive. And if the loiterer had also loitered before in the Piazza di Spagna at Rome, he might have recognised the same carriage and the same old man at the hotel, which was then occupied by General Villiers; but the valet had been changed. Just before the General left Rome his former courier, upon some pretence or other, expressed a wish to remain behind, and to recommend in his own place the present stout, active, useful, obsequious, and accommodating, close-shaven, though rather sinister-looking person, who, after almost lifting the fretful General into his carriage, and arranging his large silk handkerchief, his muff, his snuff-box, his cane, his newspaper, and his poodle, without a murmur at the General's angry complaints at the cold air or the hot sun, took his seat behind the carriage with the air of one who was now master of the vehicle and of all that it contained, and ordered the coachman to drive as usual towards Pausilippo. The same loiterer might also have observed, that on one or two occasions a young man, singularly contrasted with the feeble and pinched figure of the General, tall, and

nobly formed, but with a deep melancholy impressed upon his countenance, and dressed in mourning, had taken his seat on the opposite side of the carriage, but with a look of weariness and ennui. Little conversation passed between them, except some tart remarks of the old man on the dress or gesture of his companion, on his still continuing to wear mourning, or on some accidental interference with the silk handkerchief, the cane, the snuff-box, or the poodle, which seemed to constitute the only interest in the eyes of the decrepit valetudinarian. His remarks on passers-by were snarling and ill-natured. His observations, when made on the contents of the newspaper, of which he carefully perused all the advertisements, scarcely went beyond some faded reminiscence of past gaiety recalled by the columns of the *Morning Post*, or the price of stocks. He dozed during a great part of his ride; and if, when he woke up, he found his companion engaged in reading, he made some angry complaint that he could find no one to talk to him; or would ask, sneeringly, if that was one of the new popish books from England, and when the young man intended to turn monk.

With ill-disguised impatience, and sometimes with less of respect than became a son toward a father,—even a weak, fretful, irreligious, and mean-minded father,—Villiers either answered shortly or remained silent. And the drive seldom concluded without some suggestion from the General that, if he could not make a more agreeable companion, he might as well remain at home—a suggestion which Villiers would gladly have adopted, had not his father, in the cat-like spirit of a mouse-tormentor, whenever he found him engaged in some study or interesting occupation, called on him to come out and accompany him. Each day, and almost each

hour, brought with it some little vexation of this kind, which fretted Villiers's temper, and disturbed even his own self-respect. In his own mind miserable and doubting, still suffering from the shock which the frightful scene in the Colosseum had given to him, with no grand object before him to occupy his life, and with the daily presence of littleness and lowness in all that he saw of man, whether in the vicious infirmity of his father, or in the habits of a Neapolitan population, he became morbidly sensitive to the annoyances to which he was subjected even in the presence of society. His father's life had been more than idle or useless; it had been vicious; and Villiers knew it. And in old age a paralysis of mind was coming on which extinguished all hope of repentance. He had been a cruel husband to the mother whom Villiers adored. And in more than the little habits of daily intercourse, in threats of casting off his son, and depriving him of his inheritance, he was a tyrannical father. One person only in the house seemed to bear with him imperturbably. It was Pearce, or Mr. Pearce, as the servants, who dreaded him as much as they disliked their master, universally called him. It was he who slept in his master's room, who arranged his gouty stool, unfolded and dried his newspaper, purchased his peculiar snuff at a peculiar shop, made his posset, and administered it at night — even fed his poodle, and shaved his beard, without extorting from the old man any very violent outbreak of anger. A spell seemed to be laid upon the General by the very presence of Pearce. There was something in his look penetrating and cunning, and yet, when he chose, commanding, which at first disgusted even Villiers himself, as it overawed his father. But Pearce to his young master was more than attentive; he was obsequious and flattering,

as clever servants can be even to intelligent masters. He made himself useful in a thousand little ways, gradually superseded Villiers's own man in many trifling offices, which the cleverer eye and head of Pearce better understood. And at last he attained the grand point which he had gradually but unsuspectedly worked up to, of paying Villiers's little bills, obtaining free access to his room, and at times even copying for him a letter, or writing out some extract from a book which Villiers might wish to preserve. Villiers could not like him, but could not deny that he was a very clever, very obliging, and very useful fellow. Nor was his appreciation of his attainments diminished, when one day, having received from Pearce a transcript from a passage in Burke, in which a Latin quotation had been misprinted, he found that the error had been corrected by Pearce, who, on Villiers expressing surprise, informed him that he had been taught Latin when a boy.

And in the meanwhile what were Villiers's own occupations? He could scarcely tell himself. Stunned and horror-struck at what he had witnessed at Rome, he had delayed his departure in the hope of finding some clue to the murder of poor Macarthy, but could reach none. Strange obstacles and delays were thrown in his way by the police themselves. Once, when a cap had been found in the dark passages of the Colosseum, and a hope was raised that it might serve to trace or identify the assassin, it disappeared from his possession, and he could never find it again. Nor, indeed, was assassination so uncommon an event at Rome as to create generally the interest and suffering which it had caused in himself. He was at last advised by a judicious Italian, and advised with a degree of significance, that his search was hopeless, and that it would be

necessary to abandon it ; and with a sickened, loaded heart he followed his father to Naples.

Youth, by a strange elastic power, soon recovers even from the most frightful shock. But Villiers, even at Naples, did not recover. By degrees, indeed, the horrible vision, with which his dreams were at first haunted, died away. He no longer heard Macarthy's last "Beware!" ringing in his ears, or saw his ghastly haggard face gazing on him through his curtains at midnight, and almost reproaching him with his death. Though at the first moment all the tenderness of affection, which he had once felt, seemed to revive, afterwards the later train of association resumed its place. And especially as his temper and patience became embittered by the trials of his father, he found himself at times almost regarding poor Macarthy's memory with the same resentment as if he really had meditated the deception which he involuntarily practised. It is a sad and awful trial, heaviest perhaps of all to which human nature can be exposed, when a bold, noble, ardent mind is placed under a feeble, petty, contemptible government, which it cannot reform, and may not shake off. One only blessing can enable it to be borne, when the bold mind is actively engaged in some high and energetic work, which makes all other things seem little, and sanctifies and elevates the temper to be patient even as its Divine Master. But Villiers had no such work. His first dream of grandeur and of truth dispelled, and dispelled so horribly, he fell back into a state of dreary inactivity. He could take no interest in the ancient associations of Naples, and all that surrounded it, for the study reminded him of Rome and of Macarthy ; and he was obliged, as the thought struck him, to close his book, shut his eyes, and take refuge in the crowded noisy streets of the luxurious

city. Here he could find nothing to elevate, little to attract, but everything to effeminate and sensualize. At times he plunged into violent bodily exertion, mounting his horse, and penetrating, though with vacant eye and indolent mind, the distant scenes of the surrounding country, or taking with him some young boatmen and sailing on the bay at midnight, when his solitary dinner with his father, and the still more solitary evening, while his father was dozing in his arm-chair, had left him at liberty for the enjoyment of real solitude—the solitude of a vision-peopled nature. And these moments, when he threw his mind as it were upon a couch, and casting off all exertion of thought, all memory, and all fore-castings of the future, gave himself up to the luxurious influence of that delicious climate and glorious scenery, became at last his only enjoyment. They soothed and tranquillized him, and yet excited his imagination—acting almost like an opiate on his distracted mind, and filling him with a dreamy languor, full of luxurious sensibility, but full also of a deadly poison. His religious feelings, however crushed and chilled by what had passed, happily were not destroyed. They had been, and continued to be, his safeguard through all the worst forms of temptation to which, amidst a dissolute society, separated from all the influences of his Church, and from all examples of high rectitude in his own countrymen, he was necessarily exposed. Once, in a moment of intense weariness and self-reproach which followed a scene of contemptuous vexation from his father, and almost of recrimination on his own side, (for Villiers's sense of dutifulness was rapidly sinking,) he happened to be drawn by an acquaintance to a gambling-table, and had all but given himself up to the impulse of gaming himself; but a vision of his mother, of her prayers and injunctions, came

across him, and he left the room with precipitation. At other times, when, as he fondly thought, a better spirit was moving within him—a spirit of peace and love, undisturbed by idle controversies, and resting calmly in the great truths of religion, in which all creeds united,—he would abandon himself, not to the contemplation, but to the soft gentle influences of nature, tracing a hand of love and a vision of glory in all her works, in the bright stars, the breathless night, the eternal ocean, the soft air that fanned his brow as he lay stretched in his boat upon the sea, or sat listlessly on some wave-eaten promontory, listening to the lulling waters, or inhaling fragrance from a flower. Startled as he would have been to hear the right and only name due to such vague and idle dreamings, he was sinking into a species of Pantheism, but knew it not. And meanwhile, as the luxury from without was creeping on him, the strength within was dying away. His energy was gone, his sense of duty deadened, his self-command and self-respect powerless against the continued annoyances of his father's society. In later years, when, proved and disciplined by sufferings, Villiers looked back upon the scenes of this period, it was always with a keen and deepening remorse—remorse which in the secrecy of his own chamber found vent in stated days of humiliation and penitence. He was not indeed led to any open violent breach of filial respect, though to this he was often tempted; but his good taste saved him from it—it would have been ungentlemanly. But the cold reply when his father asked him some painful question; the dead silence to which he abandoned himself during their meals; the reluctance to meet half-way even the occasional overture of his father to a more amicable communication; the irritation which betrayed itself towards any of the in-

numerable frivolities with which his father endeavoured to beguile the lingering weariness of an old age without a hope and without a virtue ; at times even the tart and harsh reply ; the neglect of any attempt to soothe, or amuse, or elevate, his father's mind ; and the forgetfulness of prayer — of that prayer for his correction and amendment which might have availed, even when all human help seemed vain, — all this came back to Villiers when his father was gone for ever, when he had forgotten the bitterness of feeling caused by the hourly exhibition of his father's frivolities, his whims, his weaknesses, the offensive habits into which a self-indulgent old age too often sinks, and the petty wearying spirit of revenge with which he consoled himself for the acknowledged superiority of his son. and displayed his mean jealousies and resentments by thwarting and almost insulting him. It came back on him when the realities of religion had been unveiled before him ; and as he stood by his father's grave, he asked where his spirit then was, and whether he himself might not have done something to rescue it while it was upon earth.

By degrees also, as his father's infirmities increased, instead of redoubling his attentions, and devoting himself more assiduously to enliven his sick room, Villiers was tempted to absent himself, and to enjoy his freedom by prolonging his rides or boatings. To Pearce — the active, obsequious, ever-ready Pearce, who understood all the old man's humours, and had now obtained a complete command over him, so that the poor decrepit being, sinking into dotage, scarcely dared to move without asking permission and advice from his hiring, — Villiers abandoned his father. The excuse for retiring himself was easy and ready, though it was not without some pang of self-reproach. His father

disliked himself, and liked Pearce. His own presence only seemed to cause irritation, or his patience was so exhausted that he required repose and relaxation. Alas ! how easily we can excuse what we like.

One evening the General had been more than usually querulous and sarcastic upon the companion of his tête-à-tête dinner, until it amounted to rudeness ; and Villiers's suffused face showed that he was treasuring up a store of bitter feeling. As it grew later the old man's weariness increased. One by one, Pearce endeavoured to engage him with the many childish but expensive gew-gaws, in which his frivolous mind still endeavoured to find relief from the monotony of existence. The parrot repeated its lesson, the poodle had performed its tricks ; and as Villiers lifted up his eyes from some poetry which he was reading, an involuntary expression of scorn rather than of compassion rose to his lips, but was checked in time. The heat of the room became oppressive and the air offensive. Again and again Pearce was summoned to shift the valetudinarian in his deep-cushioned easy chair. His gouty stool required moving : Villiers left it to be arranged by the servant. He wished to be lifted round ; and another arm was required. Villiers, when requested to assist, coldly complied, but without any expression of thankfulness from his father or of acknowledgment on his own part. He was evidently treated as a slave. Again he was required to leave his book to ring the bell, and Villiers became fretful. The poodle nearly threw him down as he returned to his seat ; and Villiers pushed it aside, and almost kicked it, which drew a howl from the little ugly animal, and the howl drew a violent coarse exclamation from the impatient General. Villiers closed his book, and prepared to leave the room ; but his father authoritatively called him back. Villiers coldly pleaded an

engagement, and escaped. But he was overtaken at the top of the stairs by Pearce, who delivered some bitter and insulting message to him, which the artful messenger took care should assume its full force of provocation, and should sting Villiers more deeply by coming from a servant. Villiers bade the man begone, and closing the door violently behind him, issued into the street.

The hurried passionate step with which he paced the long avenues of the royal garden, into which he had entered as the first place of refuge, gave way by degrees to more quiet and composure. The evening was calm and warm; all the stars above him seemed to look down on him, as if to sooth him with eyes of peace and love. The hum of the city was dying away, and except the roll of an occasional carriage, few sounds but the plashing of the sea disturbed the stillness. As the cool air played upon his forehead, his resentment sunk by degrees into that morbid state of self-pitying, self-congratulating sensibility, in which, forgetting our own faults, we consider ourselves the victims of the faults of others, and, instead of rising up to battle with our temptations, indulge our vanity and indolence by contemplating ourselves as interesting sufferers. If Villiers could not realize his dreams of ambitious action, he could find some gratification of his visions in this placid and painless self-martyrdom. It soothed him, flattered him, enabled him to dwell dangerously on the trials to which he was exposed, and on his father's conduct, and permitted still to lurk within him all his disrespectful unfilial feelings of resentment and contempt, without calling them out so prominently as to ensure their reprobation by his conscience. He sat down by the side of the water, and as he gave himself up to the melancholy luxuriousness of indolent sensibility, and felt the charm

of nature, in calming his troubled thoughts, they fell, as they often fell, into poetry. And he all but completed a beautiful and pathetic sonnet, in which he described his own broken spirit—weary, sick, helpless, hopeless, the sport of idle thoughts, and chained to a sinful world; while the spirit of Nature was invoked and blessed as his mother, as his nurse, watching over him, notwithstanding his follies and his faults, with tender pity, soothing every pain, bearing every infirmity, and leading him on with a mother's hand to a higher and nobler state of being. It was a picture full of fascination. Villiers contemplated it again and again. Again and again a vague wild feeling of devotion rose up to the spirit of Nature; he gazed with a visionary eye upon the stars above—with a mysterious sense of infinity and power on the ocean before him—with tenderness and sympathy even on the orange blossoms, which exhaled odours on each side, as if they felt for his sorrows, and delighted to minister to his relief. In the meanwhile his father was calling for him to assist him to his bed. But Villiers had forgotten the reality in the dream, as persons often do who write poetry.

He found some perplexity and entanglement in arranging his last line, so as to express with sufficient vividness the intensity of his feelings; and, as the night was becoming cold, he rose to return home. The gates of the gardens in which he had been lingering had been long closed, but he had been favoured with a private key; and as he passed along, and within the iron railings, to the gate through which he was to obtain egress, he observed two persons, one of whom resembled the figure of Pearce, and the other was a young and seemingly delicate female, in the dress of a peasant, standing on the pavement, and engaged in deep conversation. As Villiers opened the gate, Pearce, whom he did

not recognise, had just seized the hand of his companion, which seemed reluctantly yielded up to him, and he had put it to his lips. But he was startled by hearing the gate grate on its hinges ; and with a few hasty and affectionate words the two separated. The young girl, as she passed Villiers, dropped a slight courtesy, as if recognising him ; and as the light of a lamp before an image of the Virgin fell by accident (no, not by accident ; for things which in moments of indolence or sin lead us into temptation, and end in misery, are not accidents) fell by some mysterious overruling providence full on her features ; and Villiers beheld a tender and pensive face of exquisite beauty, which timidly glanced up at him as he passed. He did not turn to look, for his mind was one of singular delicacy in all that regarded woman. But that face, once seen, was fixed before his eyes. The sight had given to him a strange mysterious impulse, which seemed to touch a hidden chord, and to awake a new spring of life within him. He had never been sensible of any thing like it before. He dashed his hand across his brow, and walked hastily on, but the face was still before him. It came that night and looked upon him in his dreams, and his first thought on waking fell on the same vision. The next afternoon the carriage came to the General's door as usual ; the General himself was lifted in ; the muff, the handkerchief, the snuff-box, the cane, the poodle — all were deposited. Pearce was at the door waiting to put up the steps ; the General was feebly and querulously demanding where Mr. Villiers was, that he might drive with him, and read the newspaper to him, but no Villiers appeared ; his servant only came to say that his master had an engagement, and could not come. The angry General, in a passion, ordered Pearce to lift him out again, and the carriage was

sent away ; and the sick man was deprived of his drive and fresh air, almost the only thing which recruited and supported him during the day.

Half an hour afterwards, Villiers himself was floating indolently in his boat, on the blue glad waters of the Bay of Naples ; and, as he lay stretched at his ease in the stern, with his Petrarch open before him, and his eyes half shaded from the sun, the boatmen rowed him gently, as if the very plashing of the oars disturbed his repose ; and followed, as he bade them, the line of coast, entering into every little bay, and bending round each ruin-crested promontory, while Villiers gave himself up to his usual luxury of dreaming. But this day his dreams were not of empire ; empires had lost their charm. Solitude, retirement, sympathising hearts, domestic affection, had found their way into his thoughts. Nations he could not find subjected to his will, and ready to be moulded by his hand. But one human heart—pure, gentle, delicate, and devoted, if such there were upon earth—might still be his ; and he might lay one head upon his bosom to find there shelter and repose from the dangers of the world. He might nerve his arm to fight battles, or to endure toils, for the one weak and helpless being who might look up to him as her only strength. And he might find one mind docile, and susceptible, and unperverted by the cold maxims of a false refinement to hang upon his lips as the fountain of truth, and to image in every thought and action the maxims which he could teach her. Still he might be a sovereign. And as the hope flashed across him, he closed his Petrarch, laid his head back upon the stern of the boat, and, as he closed his eyes, there came again before him that fair, and pensive, and exquisitely beautiful face which had glanced up at him on the night preceding, beneath the lamp of

the Virgin. He was roused by the sound of oars from an approaching boat, a little fisherman's boat, apparently returning from Naples. It neared them, rowed by a single old man, but rowed vigorously and steadily; and in the stern of the boat, amidst baskets of fruit, and singing to her father, as he rowed, her hymn to the Virgin, there sat (it was a strange coincidence, and coincidences act as spells and charms upon the strongest mind) the same figure, the same exquisitely beautiful face, which he was striving to recall to his fancy. Villiers sprang up, rubbed his eyes, watched the boat as it passed them, and exchanged a greeting with his boatmen. And again the beautiful face glanced up timidly, as if expecting possibly a recognition from Villiers. And as the little boat shot round a promontory and disappeared, Villiers ordered his own boat to follow. It seemed a providence—and a providence it was. But in the world are two powers of providence; and the good is discernible from the evil only by the holy energies with which we strive to turn accidents into virtues.

The boatmen were gaining rapidly on the little bark, when Villiers, as if recovering himself from a momentary impulse, ordered them to stop. And affecting to be busily engaged in disentangling and examining some sea-weed, which had gathered round the rudder (for passion is full of craft, and even Villiers, proudly and fiercely honest as he was, could not allow his boatmen to see what was passing in his mind), he made them rest on their oars until the little bark ran alongside a broken flight of steps in the cliff. The old man moored it fast, took out his daughter in his arms, and with her basket on her head, and still singing, she tripped lightly up the steps, and entered a little cottage hung with a trellis-work of vines, which stood on the verge of

the precipice. Villiers waited, still busily examining the sea-weed, but finding nothing that he wanted. And when no one appeared again at the door of the cottage, he gave the signal for their return to Naples; and as he returned, the boatmen observed that he did not throw himself back to dream with closed eyes in indolence, but sat up with his head buried in his hands, thinking. He was engaged to dine that day with the ambassador, to meet the Duke of Newburgh and Prince Castel-a-Mare, and all the rank and brilliancy of Naples. And Villiers sighed at the burden which awaited him, and at the dulness, formality, and heartlessness of high rank and fashionable life; and his fancy wandered off to a little cottage trellissed with vines, and a seat scooped out in the native rock, from which he might gaze upon the blue sea and the glorious sky, free and untrammelled, but not alone, —with one to whom he might himself give dignity and honour, instead of receiving it from others. But the dream was broken by the boat touching land, and the first sight was the obsequious Pearce, with a face not merely of feigned but sincere consternation (for his schemes as well as his gains were at stake), who had ran down to the beach to inform him that his father had been seized with an attack of paralysis. He had been violently excited by Villiers declining to drive with him; had indulged, Pearce took care to inform him, in expressions which Villiers was obliged to command him to desist from repeating, and in the midst became speechless.

Villiers soon stood by his father's bed-side, not without remorse, yet still excusing himself. The physicians were present, and all agreed that by avoiding any future excitement, and with great care the patient might recover. And Villiers no sooner heard it than the load passed from his mind, and

he found his fancy again wandering off to the trellised cottage and the blue sea. One year before had any one told him that he could stand by what might seem to be the death-bed of his father, and that in that awful moment a single thought of self or self-enjoyment could intrude upon him, he would have spurned the charge with indignation: but admit self in little things, and great things will not exclude it.

The patient did recover, so far at least as to resume his usual habits; and with the usual habits came the former temper, and with the former temper came Villiers's former trial. And at first the shock and warning which he had once received operated as such warnings are designed to do. He bore with his father more patiently, if not more humbly, from the fear of bringing upon himself more future remorse, if not from filial duty and Christian affection. But the health of the poor old man seemed at last quite re-established, the memory of the sick-bed scene died away, Villiers's heart was full of other things; it was possessed by a feeling — and possessed persons are not masters of themselves.

As the spring came on, he himself became an altered man. Even his common acquaintance observed that his eye was lighter and his step firmer — that life seemed to have a charm, and time an object for him. He mixed indeed in the general society of the place far less than ever; but when he was induced to join a party, he was cheerful, and even playful, instead of reserved and abstracted. His pride and coldness seemed to be thawed by some better and happier influence. There was more of natural dignity and command in his manner, as if he was conscious of standing in relations and a position which give to men individual consequence and character. Even the Countess of Lurley stopped one day behind the screen, as she came into her

drawing-room, to observe him tête-à-tête with her little boy, playing with him upon the carpet, and taking the child with fondness to his arms, as it screamed out with delight at some little frolic with which Villiers was amusing it.

“You ! exclaimed the Countess, “you, whom we are all so afraid of, playing with my child !” What can have happened to you ?” And the lady smiled significantly. But Villiers faced the look calmly and steadily, and only remarked, that persons when happy in themselves were generally fond of children ; and that he was, he thanked God, very happy. And again the lady smiled significantly ; but Villiers shook his head ; and he was not a person whom even the gay and lively Countess presumed to banter.

If the servants of the General’s establishment had been examined on the subject of their young master’s change of feeling, (and servants in general know more than any other persons in the house, and, though treated as unworthy of any respect, yet must be admitted, whether we like it or no, into our greatest secrets,) they would have brought together a number of little facts, which they had themselves frequently put into a conjecture in the servants’ hall, and might have constructed from it a tale. The groom would have stated, that soon after the General’s illness Villiers had resumed his rides, but the groom’s attendance was dispensed with, and the horse’s head was always turned in one direction. His master’s daily ride, without variation, was along the road which winds to the north, by the side of the bay ; and the groom also had remarked that the horse, Villiers’s favourite Mameluke, never bore marks of having gone to any great distance. The cook would have complained that now, when the old General was ordered to dine early and in his own

room, her young master's late dinner was again and again spoiled by waiting for him. Frequently none was ordered, and when ordered little was tasted. He had also asked her to write out a recipe for some little delicacies, which she had often tasked her skill to provide for him (for the servants all were fond of their young master, though not a little afraid of him), on the pretext that he knew a friend who would perhaps like to have them. The housekeeper, the good-natured fat Mrs. Boucher, knew nothing that was going on out of doors, but when bruised fruits and bad vegetables were brought into the kitchen, she never ceased to wonder why her poor little Pauline did not make her appearance again, with the finest melons and newest eggs that ever came into the Naples market. And when the name of Pauline was mentioned, the housemaid would look significantly and resentfully at Mr. Pearce, and Mr. Pearce would bite his lips and leave the room. Pearce's manner, indeed, had undergone a great alteration. He could seldom or ever obtain leave to absent himself from the General's side. If he left the room, the bell was rung instantly to recall him for some trivial purpose, to pick up a book, or move a chair, or what was more frequently the poor old man's real wish, to amuse him with some of the Naples gossip, which, partly forged and false, and partly collected from various sources known only to himself, Pearce was always able to retail, and to insinuate in the midst a variety of little hints which it was his object to impress upon the old man's mind. At last his master's confidence had reached so far that he was called on even to open and read the letters which Pearce brought from the post. And this advance was a great satisfaction to Pearce, for it saved him some little trouble, and enabled him to bring the letters direct from the post to his master,

without delaying, as he had before been used to do, in his own little room, with bolted doors, and the keyhole carefully closed, before he made his appearance with the budget. He was only surprised, just about this time, to find that no more letters arrived for his young master ; and on inquiring at the post-office, he was informed that Mr. Villiers had given orders for them to be delivered to none but himself.

It was about a month after the General's attack of paralysis that Pearce obtained leave one evening to go into the country. He was seen to take the road which runs along the north side of the bay. And it was late when he returned. As the footman opened the door for him, he was surprised to see his face distorted with passion, his eyes full of malignity, his lips almost bloody with the compression of his teeth. He went hastily into his room. When the General rang for him he pleaded illness ; and was heard by Villiers's man all the night striding up and down the room, muttering incoherent exclamations of jealousy and revenge. He made his appearance the next morning, ill-disguising, notwithstanding his wonderful powers of self-concealment, the passion under which he had spent the night. And there was a fierceness and strangeness of manner in his mode of addressing Villiers, which almost amounted to insolence, and which Villiers, unconscious as he was of what was really passing within him, or of any cause of provocation given by himself, was disposed to attribute almost to incipient insanity, and desired his own man to keep an eye upon him. This manner continued for some days ; and during them Pearce was employed, as often as he could escape from the General's room, (even to whom he showed an impatience and violence of temper which the old man could not understand,) in writing long

letters, which he took to the post-office himself ; some of them, as the clerk at the post-office observed, being addressed to a female, and the others to persons at Rome, Lyons, and England, especially to a town called Hawkstone. Nor was he without receiving letters in return ; and after perusing them in his own little room, some he would carefully burn, picking up and destroying every fragment which escaped the flames ; and others he locked up anxiously in a little box, which he deposited in a corner of his room, under a loose plank in the floor, over which he never forgot to draw a huge and heavy bureau. By degrees his manner became more calm and subdued ; a change which he attributed, as he told the General, to some favourite medicine which the General had recommended him as an admirable specific for the headache, which he pleaded as a cause for his altered appearance. And the General was pleased and flattered by his own success in working a cure. To Villiers also he resumed his usual deportment, was still more assiduous and obliging, even made him a humble apology for his former manner, and attributed it to indisposition, a rush of blood to the head, to which he was subject from a child ; asked if he could get his letters from the post as usual (which Villiers declined) ; and but for a dark malignant scowl upon him, which he seemed to indulge, as if indemnifying himself for perpetual self-restraint, whenever he looked back on Villiers passing him, no one would have remarked in him anything but the officiousness of a remarkably clever, bustling, and rather fawning servant, who seemed, as he often acknowledged was the case, to have known better days.

CHAP. XVI.

IN the meanwhile Villiers, unconscious that he had caused suffering to a single human being, was enjoying what he had never before enjoyed in his life — happiness. The vision which he had pictured to himself — the vine-trellised cottage, the seat scooped out from the living rock, the gazing on the deep blue sea, the face, the exquisite face of innocence and beauty, not yet indeed to lie upon his bosom, but to look up into his eye with wonder and all but adoration — the mind simple and docile, which he might mould like wax to take from him every stamp of truth — the one idolized object on which he might pour, unchecked, the whole tide of his affections, — all this some mysterious hand had realized for him ; and earth to him was now a heaven.

“Will he not come to-day, father?” almost whispered the poor Pauline, as one evening the old man and herself had stood for more than an hour on the rock beneath the cottage watching for the approach of Villicr’s little boat, rowed now only by himself. “Will he not come to-day?” and she crept into her father’s arms, and he felt her hot tears stealing down her cheek.

“My child!” he replied, “my darling child! even these tears I am thankful for. Your happiness is too great, and every pain-mixed with it is like an expiation for it. If you suffer as well as rejoice, your joy may yet be lasting.” And as he bent his reverend grey head over her delicate neck, and gave her his blessing, Pauline looked up fearfully but fondly to

ask him with her look why he should speak so sadly.

“My child,” he continued, “I am old, and have seen the world, and know what lies in human nature; and though now we are living lonely on this little nook of rock, in better times I have served in armies, and walked with nobles in courts and palaces. And yet, if there rose before me all whom I have ever known of noble beings — and Providence permitted me to choose for you the noblest and the best, — I scarcely know that I could fix on one to whom I could consign you for ever with so much hope and so much joy as this young Englishman.” And as he said this, he felt the poor girl’s face laid closer on his bosom, as if thankful and proud of his praise. “But that such a lot,” he continued, “should have fallen upon you, so young, so poor, so destitute of all help,” — he corrected himself, and reverentially taking off his cap, added, — “of all help but heaven, this is to me strange and almost fearful. And I tremble lest so great a seeming good should be only a temptation, and should end in evil.” And he lifted up her face and looked gravely and steadily into her eyes yet wet with tears. “My child, he is rich, and you are poor; he is young, and I am old. When I die, and I shall soon die, will he still be to you all that I have been?” And Pauline shuddered, and once more buried her face in his bosom.

“Have you told him,” he continued, “all that he ought to know?”

Pauline faltered “Yes.”

“Everything?” asked the old man, searchingly.

“And again she answered “Yes. How, father, could I help it; how could I hide anything from him — from him who loves me so dearly?”

And Pauline spoke the truth. Almost one of the first questions which Villiers had put to her,

when he dared to do so, and felt that now their whole souls should be open to each other, was the one so natural to a devoted and therefore a jealous heart, and yet so hard to ask and to answer: "Was the hand now to be his own never devoted to another?" Villiers knew not how to frame it — had hesitated — had asked it more by looks than words; and Pauline understood it, rather by her own wish to answer it than by his expressions. And though her reverence for him was so great, that often, when he led her to speak of herself, she would hide her face, and sit beside him without the power of doing more than answer "Yes," to his interrogations: now her look sprang up with confidence and courage, and meeting his anxious and inquiring eye without shrinking for a moment, she said to him, that there were things which she wished to tell him, which he had a right to know, but that she could do it only in writing. A pang struck to Villiers's heart. He withdrew himself coldly and proudly from her side, and walked from the seat where they were resting to the edge of the cliff. It seemed as if the glory of his vision was departing, and some rude hand had swept the brightness from the blossom of his beautiful flower. But he heard a sound as of a sob near him. And Pauline stood a little way behind him, as not daring to approach, her face covered with her hands, and the tears streaming through her delicate fingers.

"You are angry with me," she said, faintly (and all his fondness returned). "You are angry with me for not telling you at once. I will tell you now — this moment — anything rather than that you should be angry. I can bear anything but this;" and she burst into a flood of tears. "I know," she continued, taking her hands from her face, "I know what you would ask me. Never, never! O that

you could look into my heart! Never till you came."

Villiers's heart leaped with joy. And he sprang forward to catch her to his bosom; but he checked himself, for she was not yet his; and with a superstitious reverence he would not allow even his own affection to presume on her exquisite delicacy. He thanked her, and blessed her fervently.

"Stop," she said, you have not heard all; "there has been one who was kind and good to me—kinder than I deserved. And my poor father is old, and soon will be unable to work; and he feared for me, if he should die and I should be left alone. But when I told him that I would rather die myself, he did not urge it. And the person who was kind to me once is kind to me no more. He knows that it is vain to ask for what I have given to another."

Villiers understood the tale, short and broken as it was. One impatient question came to his lips; but as he checked it, Pauline herself anticipated it.

"You must never ask me," she said, "who it was, for I could not tell it — no, not even to you; and I know you will not ask me."

And as she looked up firmly, and with unsuspecting confidence, to demand his promise, Villiers gave it readily, and kept it honourably.

"And now, my darling child," he said, "your father is calling us. Let us go to him; and I will read to you, and you shall sing to me your own dear hymn."

"And you are not angry with me now," she said, timidly. And as she caught his look of deep affection, her heart bounded within her, and she sprang off like a fawn to seek her father, and find her lute.

Two years afterwards, Villiers was lying in a miserable stifling chamber, bound hand and foot,

and his brain on fire. And in the midst of a paroxysm of raving, in which even the stern sturdy men who were placed to guard him could scarcely prevent him from bursting his bands, the voice of some poor singer in the street, led there as by a pitying angel, commenced the same simple strain. Villiers caught it, and strove to sit up upon his low pallet. His eye gazed wonderingly around him; and, as the simple music still fell on his ear, tears began to flow; and visions, far other than those which had nursed his phrenzy, came gently on him. He was sitting on the seat scooped out of the living rock, and his own Pauline beside him; and behind them was standing the venerable old man, listening to their solemn vows, and blessing them: and then he was floating with them both on the smooth swelling waters at evening, just as the moonlight began to ripple on the sea; and a fairy, gentle voice was singing the same sweet hymn. And then they were both tending together a sick bed in a vine-trellised cottage, watching over the patient sufferings, soothing every pain, bearing with every infirmity of a dying father — Pauline's father, not his own. The scene changed, and there was a holy chapel — a holy ceremony — a stoled priest. And then they were both kneeling again before the same dying bed; and the old man was lying with his arms crossed, looking up gratefully to heaven, and blessing God that now he could depart in peace. But the music ceased — another thought came upon Villiers; and with a shuddering groan he sprang up in agony, and called wildly for his child; and the keeper sternly bade him lie still, and not make a noise.

While these delicious moments, so bright and so soothing, even when recalled in dreams, and gone for ever, were gliding on, where was the aged,

miserable, sinful father of the young, happy — and as his own deceitful conscience whispered — innocent young man. He was sinking daily into his dotage. As if still further to remove the obstacles which might have embarrassed or embittered the full enjoyment of the happiness to which Villiers was now abandoning himself, almost, thought Villiers again, by a good providence (as if a good providence ever administered to us pleasure, except that it may nerve us to duties), the General, instead of wishing for his son's presence, expressed more openly his aversion to him, and frequently passed whole days in his own room without seeing him. Pearce was acquiring, every hour, more influence over him — was becoming more necessary to his comfort ; and from suggesting advice, and hinting opinions, he had now assumed the right of dictating to his master. And his master faintly and timidly succumbed to all that he proposed. Something in this beyond the mere art of ruling, which Pearce had so deeply studied, might have been discovered by one who knew all that passed in the long confinement of the old man's room, to which Pearce uncomplainingly devoted himself. He felt that it could not last long ; and the gradual approach of success in his grand object encouraged him to discharge the most wearying and even offensive offices, without exhibiting more impatience than was necessary to keep the old man, as he called his master, in proper order.

Pearce, like Villiers himself, knew (for things of the kind are known far wider than we imagine, when we hide our eyes and think we are not seen) that the General's life had been one of vice. But he knew nothing of particulars. And among all the various arts which he employed to obtain the knowledge of this important secret, in conformity with the leading principle and policy of

the religious school in which he had been brought up, none had succeeded in throwing clear light upon the subject, until one day's post, among a number of letters, brought one written in a coarse, vulgar hand, and marked *private*. On this occasion Pearce did not proceed, as usual, direct to his master's room. He retired first to his own, and there, with bolted door and the key-hole carefully closed, he found little difficulty in mastering the secret. He had been employed before in a foreign post-office, and had there learned much, which he found eminently useful to him in after-times. As he placed the packet of letters, as usual, on the little table by the General's easy chair, where he sat propped up with pillows, his thin, peaked, wrinkled features peering malignantly from a large fur cap, and his legs wrapped carefully in blankets, Pearce retired where he could command a view of what passed, in a large mirror, without being supposed to watch him. He saw the thin bony fingers, almost like claws, of the old man stretched out to grasp the letters, which he could scarcely hold. The spectacles were shifted, and Pearce himself was called to wipe them. The letters once more were feebly taken, and laid one by one aside, as the old man scrutinised the post-mark, till he came to the one marked *private*. His pale face became of an ashy hue; his hand shook violently; and casting a cowardly side glance at his obsequious servant, to see if he was looking, he thrust the letter under the folds of the blanket. Pearce waited in vain to be asked to open and read the letters as usual. He then proposed it himself; but the unhappy old man, in a trembling husky voice, told him he might go and leave him, for that he wanted to sleep. His bell rang again for Pearce, about an hour after; his countenance had then resumed its ordinary look,

and Pearce observed nothing, but that he must have moved from his chair himself (an exertion which he had been incapable of making for weeks), and that the remains of burnt paper were lying under the grate. The look of exultation which Pearce cast upon his prey, now completely in his hands, was even heightened, as the old man asked for his son, and Pearce could inform him that he had been absent for several days, and (as he took care to add, maliciously,) that he was seldom at home now, since the General had become worse. No one knew where he went to.

This was a falsehood, for this secret also Pearce had long penetrated. It was a spot which he himself had known—respecting which he had himself indulged dreams and visions—visions far different from Villiers, but which never occurred to his mind without filling him with the spirit of revenge and jealousy almost to madness.

On that day he said nothing more. Two days after he was summoned to read a letter from the General's lawyer, alluding to a power reserved to the General in some marriage settlement of leaving his property to another branch of the family. And Pearce took care to sigh. And when the General fretfully asked him the meaning of his sigh, he hesitated, and at last was compelled reluctantly to lament that Mr. Villiers did not show as much respect and affection for his father as became a young man, heir to such an estate. Another night the General's rest was broken by a ringing of bells and disturbance in the house, and Pearce took care to inform him that it was caused by his son, who constantly came in late. Another time he went still farther; and appearing with a face of astonishment and reserve, as if possessed of some melancholy secret, which he was resolved to hint, but not to disclose,

he permitted the General to extort from him a confession that there were sad stories about Mr. Villiers, and he feared he was going on ill. And a few words were enough to suggest all that he wished to the old man, whose mind with readiness suspected in others all that he had been guilty of himself. With vice, indeed, even in his son, he could readily have borne; he would have admitted it as a matter of course: but when Pearce hinted at something else, at the possibility of his son abandoning himself to an infatuation, as he called it, and throwing himself away for life in a degrading connexion, he touched a chord in the old man's mind which lay entwined with all his favourite schemes, and awoke his most violent passions. Mean and paltry as his usual habits were, since from the extravagances of a luxurious youth he had become calculating and selfish, he had formed and cherished for years one plan having a show of dignity—the marriage of his son with his cousin, Lady Eleanor, and the reunion of the old family estates of Claremont and the Priory. We all know how deeply an idea once admitted, and allowed to shoot out into fancies and dreams, in the morbid indolence of a sick room, or an unoccupied old age, will take possession of the whole man. To touch this, to hint a doubt of the possibility of realizing it, was to throw the General into a violent outbreak of temper. This had been one of the most embittering subjects on which he had harped to his son, till even the natural inclination which Villiers might have felt towards the project gave way beneath the tormenting and overbearing indelicacy in which his father dwelt upon it. And in his heart of hearts he had resolved that no such mercenary thoughts should ever be connected with that marriage tie, which, whenever and to whomever it should bind him, he recognized

as most sacred and most ennobling. On the same subject Pearce himself, thoroughly master of his tactics, had at first indulged his master in assisting his fancy, and joining in his calculations. And now, as if seizing on every opportunity to exasperate the poor enfeebled man, on this he artfully touched each day, contriving to separate the two objects, and to present to the general's mind the possibility of realizing one if not the other ; and if he could not effect the marriage through his son's wilfulness, at least of uniting the estates. There was one difficulty, one prejudice, as Pearce well knew, most difficult to surmount : Lady Eleanor was a Roman Catholic ; and though the old man, careless of religion, could have borne to see her united with his son for the purpose of uniting the estates in the person of his own heir, he was not yet prepared to throw his own property into the hands of a Papist. His prejudices against popery were strong, and vulgar. Of its really deadly and destructive nature he knew nothing. But he disliked it—disliked it the more from the vexation which his union with Lady Esther had brought on him ; and this obstacle Pearce was to remove. It was not a mere thought of his own. If we could have obtained possession of that mahogany box, buried under the loose plank, and covered with the huge bureau, in Pearce's little room, and could then have perused the letters, which, with the Roman postmark upon them, he had received from time to time, we might have obtained a deeper insight into the springs and objects of his conduct. But whatever caution and slowness he had originally shown, his success became more and more apparent each day. The poor old man was soon entirely at his disposal. A hint dexterously thrown in one day, and accompanied with one of those significant looks which Pearce could so

well assume, revealed to the terrified General that the secret, which he thought was buried in his own bosom now, and would be buried for ever in his grave, was known also to another person, and that person his servant. In vain he endeavoured to persuade himself that his conscience had taken alarm too quickly—that Pearce's words meant nothing. Pearce understood it all, and contrived without delay to repeat the hint, dropping also a little circumstance, which removed all doubt. Farther he did not go. He never threatened, or presumed upon his possession of this knowledge; though the General would have purchased his silence by any humiliation. His attentions were redoubled; his manner still more obliging than ever. And the General became bound to him, and ready to comply with all his suggestions, far more than any menaces or violence could have made him. It suited, however, Pearce's purpose cautiously to open the subject of religion. With a most artful and delicate hand he contrived to touch even the seared and hardened conscience of his victim by fear. He himself affected and exhibited a devotional spirit. At times he led the General to ask questions, which brought on some tale of superstition, some thoughts which awakened in the unhappy man fears of a future state, and longings for more safety in the prospect to which he was compelled to look forward. Pearce dwelt with energy and fluency on the peace and comfort of his own mind, relieved from all the burden of past sins by the absolution of his priest, and secure in the intercession of the Saints. The old man listened, and wondered at the new tone of his servant, now almost become his companion; but the ideas were not lost. They came home to him more and more when his rest began to be disturbed at night by strange noises, which Pearce, always

ready by his bed-side, took care to interpret and comment on, till the old man shook in his bed, and the cold sweat stood on his brow. Then Pearce would drop suggestions of the peace and comfort which were ensured to all who were members of the One Church. But the old man gave no signs of change. And the noises became more frequent, and his rest more disturbed. At last he was awakened from his sleep one night by a figure standing by his bed-side. The old man started up in an agony of terror. The figure motioned him to remain still—uttered some words to him, and disappeared. And Pearce, awakened, or rather affecting to be awakened, by his cry of terror, found him senseless.

A few days after that, he had a long interview with his son, in which he violently and peremptorily insisted on Villiers immediately abandoning the connection which he had formed, and returning to England, that he might prosecute his favourite plan of a union with Lady Eleanor. Villiers steadily refused. His father menaced him with the consequences of his refusal. Villiers begged that he would act as he thought fit. His father bade him depart, and almost imprecated a curse upon him. And Villiers proudly left the room, and never again saw his father alive. Pearce had heard all that passed. As Villiers came out of the room, stung to the quick with the language which his father had used towards the being whom he cherished most upon earth, exasperated most of all by the violent effort with which he had compelled himself to leave his father in ignorance of the real nature of his connection with her, that he might not irretrievably provoke him to do that which would so deeply injure her, Pearce met him, and for a moment the fierce passion of the vindictive wretch overcame his caution; he uttered something which made the

veins in Villiers's forehead swell almost to bursting, and his eyes flashed fire.

"Villain!" he cried, "whom did you say? going to whom?" And Pearce no way intimidated by the arm that was lifted ready to crush him, with bitter and insulting sarcasm, asked of him again if he was going to his —— Before he could finish the offensive word he was levelled on the ground. "To my lawful wedded wife!" said Villiers; and, spurning the fellow from him, he rushed out of the house.

Two days afterwards the physicians ordered the General to remove to Rome. And solitary, with none but Pearce now with him, and sitting by his side, the miserable old man drove for the last time from the Chiaia, bearing upon every feature of his face the mark of terror and of death.

CHAP. XVII.

It was late one night, nearly twelve months afterwards, that a calash covered with mud, and the horses ready to drop with exhaustion, drove rapidly into the Piazza di Spagna. As they whirled round the corner, the single traveller who was in it stretched himself out to catch a sight of a house before him, in which, while all the other windows in the square were dark, and the inhabitants buried in slumber, two windows were still lighted, though thickly curtained. As the carriage stopped at the door, without waiting for the exhausted postilions, who could scarcely get off their horses to put down the steps, Villiers sprang out of it, haggard, pallid, and in the deepest mourning. He tottered as he entered the house, and caught sight of the face of a servant, full of that mysterious gloominess and forced sympathy which is worn by domestics when death is approaching, or has already fallen upon a family. The servant opened gently the door of the saloon; but Villiers made an effort to pass by, and proceed at once to his father's bed-room. But the servant detained him. "Persons were with him," he said. And when Villiers asked if there was any hope, the man shook his head. He would have asked if the last awful moment was close at hand; but there is a strange and awful feeling which it is no superstition to observe and realise when death is near us, a stillness and creeping of the flesh, we know not how, which told Villiers that his father was now lying in his last agonies. The servant left, promising to come back the moment Villiers could

be admitted into the sick room ; and Villiers knelt down, overpowered with awe, and in that awe almost forgetting his own misery. But a smothered cry of great agony and terror from the adjoining chamber struck upon him ; and he could bear the delay no longer. The next moment he was in his father's bed-room. The curtains of the bed were open : by the bed-side stood the nurse and Pearce ; and two priests, habited in their vestments, were preparing to administer the rite of extreme unction. But it was too late ; Villiers glanced upon the bed, and saw that all was over. The ghastly features, the convulsed mouth, the eyes still staring, the hands clutched fiercely on the bed-clothes, the hair standing on end — Villiers saw it all, and sank again upon his knees in intense agony ; for now, when it was too late, he asked himself if this might not have been averted.

He was roused from a stupor by the necessity of removing from the room. And as he was passing to his own apartment which he had occupied before, Pearce came up to him, and insolently ordered the servant to prepare a bed for him in the north room. The servant stared at the person who presumed to give orders in a house where Villiers himself was now master. But Pearce repeated the order, and desired Villiers to make himself at home. And Villiers, unheeding everything, and staggering under remorse as well as suffering, looked at him, scarcely knowing what he said, and was persuaded by the old housekeeper to retire and lie down, though not in sleep.

Sleep, indeed, except in rare and feverish fits, had not visited him for weeks. The moment he closed his eyes there came before him that one vision, that pensive, delicate, exquisitely beautiful face, which had haunted him so blissfully ever since its first appearance. But only once or twice did it

appear in all its beauty, radiant with joy, as when he first called her his own, or calm in the pensive enjoyment of deepest happiness, as when he sat by her side on that seat of rock, and taught her lessons of goodness from his own manly, upright heart. These were the appearances which he dreaded most; and by a secret instinct, whenever they approached, he started from his broken slumber, not daring to face the agony which would await him on awaking. More frequently the vision came in a very different guise; but Villiers could bear it better, for there was no deceit in it, no frightful revulsion from the dream to the reality. It came pale, and wan, and feeble, but still beautiful; sometimes attired as one who, sickening under a fatal disease, was still able to be removed from her bed, and propped up with pillows to breathe fresher air; sometimes with a sleeping child lying in her bosom;—then with a few sweet flowers strewed upon her forehead, the lips motionless, the eyes closed, the head enveloped in its grave-clothes. But to-night it came in a form more fearful. The delicate beautiful face came, indeed, and looked upon him as before, but it changed suddenly into the horrible and ghastly figure which he had witnessed on his father's death-bed. It seemed to utter on him fearful reproaches; to imprecate a curse upon himself and on his children, with the same voice with which his father had bade him depart, in the last words which he had spoken to him while alive. The eyes glared frightfully upon him; claws were stretched out to seize him; a cry—the cry of agony which had pierced him to the heart from his father's room—once more rang in his ears; and shaking from head to foot, the big drops standing on his forehead, his heart beating with terror, and his breath gasping, he

struggled out of his sleep and looked wildly round him.

A clock was ticking on the mantel-piece, and a few flickering gleams struggled from the dying embers on the hearth. He sat up on the bed, and, breathing more freely, attempted, not to sleep again—for this he dared not do—but to pray for forgiveness for the neglect, the undutifulness, the harsh, unforgiving spirit, which, as a son, he had shown to his now miserable father—for the self-indulgence in which he had abandoned him to the artifices of a menial—for the proud unbending temper with which he had kept aloof from him ever since he had left Rome, receiving no letters except a rare statement of his father's health from a physician; and resolved on making no overtures for a reconciliation, lest he should be supposed to be actuated by mercenary policy. At the time all this had appeared to him innocent, even high-minded and just. Now he knew that it was sin; and sin the beginning of all others—the dishonouring of parents, even of parents who are sinful themselves. And then for the first time it struck him that the judgments of God are just. He had forsaken his father for a device of his own heart, and a desire of his own eyes: and the desire of his eyes had been taken from him. The punishment had fallen just when the sin was consummated. And he who had left his father alone in the world, to sink into his grave in the arms of hirelings, and with no consolation but the delusions of an anodyne for a guilty conscience, purchased by an act of apostacy, and after all snatched from him at the last, was now himself left alone in the world, stripped of his dreams, his hopes, his affections—like a wreck abandoned by its crew, and tossed idly on the waters.

One little gleam of soothing thought—soothing,

because it revealed a duty as well as an enjoyment—stole on him when he remembered that, widower as he was, he was still a parent. And as the fondness of the father awoke in him a train of softer feelings, the tears coursed each other down his cheek. He rose, threw his dressing-gown around him, and, opening his writing-case, among papers which he never left behind him, and which were carefully labelled and concealed in a secret drawer, he sought for a miniature, delicately finished, over which he hung in silence, recalling all the scenes with which it was associated,—the light step,—the look of pensive sweetness, varying with each thrill of affection into deep devotion for himself,—the delights of those hours when he had hung over her as she sang, or when she had seated herself at his feet, looking up archly but docilely to hear what he would read or teach her,—the thousand little acts of love with which she had solaced the last days of her venerable father (for she, thought Villiers, with a pang, never despised and never neglected the author of her being),—the simple look of wonder with which she had listened to his question, when he told her that perhaps poverty might be their lot; and would she still love him?—and then the lingering illness, the patient suffering, the tears for him alone, the prayers over the head of her child, the fervour with which she commended it to him, with her memory as its safeguard—all these recollections stole out one by one like stars upon an evening sky, till he seemed once more to be living in the midst of the realities—to have an object and a being still before him, whose presence would rule his life and elevate his thoughts—whom he might almost adore now, even as he adored her when living. And his heart, once touched with this emotion, passed on to a higher region, and to the only Being who is

present always, and can elevate and sanctify the soul, and whom the heart of man may indeed adore. He knelt down, and prayed earnestly, not only for forgiveness of past sins, but for strength to bear their punishment, and to atone for them, as far as men may atone, by humility and dutiful obedience for ever after. He prayed also for a reunion with her whom he had lost; for a blessing on his child: and by degrees all his thoughts and affections concentrated round his infant; and he felt that it was an object which might absorb him wholly, and be to him his happiness and life.

He was still kneeling, with his face upturned to heaven, and the lamp which he had lighted had flickered and died away in the socket, leaving only the gleam from the ashes of the wood fire, when he heard a slight noise in a distant corner of the room, and looking up, observed a thin streak of light stealing on the wall. At first he thought it a reflection from the fire; but it grew wider and stronger, and the heavy tapestry curtain behind which it appeared visibly moved. At another time Villiers would have advanced without a fear to examine the cause. But all that he had suffered and witnessed—the thought of what was lying at that moment beneath the same roof—the recollections which had so long haunted him—now chilled him with a superstitious awe. He remained motionless, and hidden by the huge chair before which he was kneeling, with his eyes fixed on the increasing glimmer of light. An exclamation almost escaped him as the curtain was slowly withdrawn, and a human face peered out from behind it. It looked round cautiously—advanced—the whole figure appeared, and Villiers saw that it was Pearce. His eye glanced first upon the open writing-case and the packet of papers, as if he would willingly have seized upon them. Then,

furtively looking round the room, he stole to the bed-side, and, gently peeping through the curtains, started back, and almost stumbled and fell, as Villiers sprang up from his kneeling posture and demanded what he wanted. An ordinary person would have required some little time to recover from such a shock ; but Pearce, in emergencies of the kind, was not an ordinary person. Prepared and composed in a minute, he answered that he had heard Villiers moving ; was afraid that he was ill ; had come to see if he could be of any service. Villiers eyed him with some suspicion. But Pearce still preserved the same composure. And on Villiers assuring him that nothing was the matter, Pearce begged his pardon, and retired through the regular entrance. Villiers did not return to his bed till he had examined the passage behind the heavy tapestry curtain, and finding a secret door in the wainscot communicating with a narrow staircase, he contrived to block it up with some furniture. But it was daylight before he was able again to close his eyes.

It was late the next morning before any one would venture to approach Villiers's room. His bell had not rung. And it was only the good-natured house-keeper, Mrs. Boucher, who had courage at last to take him some breakfast without his asking for it. She found him dressed ; but so pale, so thin, so thoroughly wretched in appearance, that the poor woman, after placing the tray on the table, could not refrain from sitting down in a chair ; and, hiding her face in her apron, she burst into tears.

"Oh, sir ! Oh, master Ernest !" she cried, as she sobbed violently, "if you had but been here, this would not have been — if you had but answered the letters !"

Villiers himself was leaning his face upon the mantel-piecke, and the tears streaming down his cheeks

But at the mention of letters he raised himself up to ask "What letters?"

"Ours, sir," said Mrs. Boucher, "which we, that is I and the butler, made bold to write to you, to tell you what was doing."

Villiers had never received any. "I had," he said "but one or two letters from here, and they came from Signor Villetti, the doctor; and they all told me things were going on well, till I heard from Mr. Beattie, and then I came here immediately.

The poor housekeeper seemed amazed. "Then, sir," she said, "there has been some foul play, and that Italian doctor ought never to have been brought here. It was not we who sent for him, but that man,—I suppose we must call him Mr. Pearce now. And the General, poor man, would never hear of any one else."

And the ice once broken, the motherly, loquacious Mrs. Boucher proceeded to explain to Villiers all that had passed in his absence; how they had been ordered suddenly to Rome, no one knew why; but Pearce had pretended some advice from the doctors; how, when they reached Rome, no visitors were admitted but one or two Englishmen, whom the servants had not seen before, and, by degrees, a priest from one of the colleges; how Pearce had contrived to take the whole management of affairs upon himself, carefully excluding the servants from even seeing their master, except when they caught sight of him as Pearce assisted him down the stairs to take his usual drive; how, more than once, Pearce had brought with him a sort of lawyer, and Mrs. Boucher, on passing the door of her master's room, as it stood ajar, had seen him with a pen in his hand, and Pearce standing by to guide it as he signed a paper;—and then came complaints of Pearce's increased arrogance and domineering habits,

which none of the other servants could endure,—just, Mrs. Boucher said, as if he was master of the house. “Oh, sir!” she concluded, “I am afraid there has been foul play, and you will find things very bad.”

Villiers scarcely entered into the latter part of the sentence, but the former struck him to the heart. And he asked to what she alluded. Upon which Mrs. Boucher proceeded to enumerate many little facts. As she passed the General’s door one day, she had heard high words between Pearce and his master; and when the General wanted to drive one way, Pearce would order the carriage to drive another. And the old man was not allowed to see any of his old friends; and the doctor, Signor Villetti, would prohibit him from having things to eat and drink which he used to be fond of. “And then, sir,” she continued, sinking her voice to a whisper, and looking anxiously round the room, “one day, as I was going up stairs, and Mr. Pearce had gone out, I was standing just by his door; and what should I see, to my wonder, but the door softly open, and your poor father himself looked out. It was in this very room, which Mr. Pearce had put him into. And he made me come in. He could hardly walk; and there he sat down in that arm-chair; and there was nothing about him comfortable, no book or any thing; and they had taken away his dog Fido, sir, that you remember—a little ugly thing it was, and always getting in the way. I remember one night it nearly threw me down the stairs. It was the night we got to Rome: I was coming up stairs in the dark.” And where Mrs. Boucher’s reminiscences would have carried her no one could have prophesied. But Villiers recalled her to his father. “Oh, sir! I was going to tell you what he told me, and what I got the butler to write off by that night’s post. I would have written myself, sir, only my handwriting

is bad. And yet I had some good schooling, and my father was in very comfortable circumstances, and brought me up well. I used to go to school at the Park-gate—old Mrs. Bond's, close by the great elm near the Priory ruins."

And once more Villiers impatiently recalled her. Mrs. Boucher begged pardon, and at last Villiers learned from her that the General had complained to her of ill-treatment; had said that he was very much afraid of Pearce; that Pearce had become a tyrant, and he could bear it no longer. Only when Mrs. Boucher had proposed that he should be sent away, the unhappy man turned pale, and said, "No, that could not be." And then the good woman had ventured to say something about Mr. Ernest, and that he ought to be sent for. And the General had seemed sad and downcast; and complained that every one had deserted him—that even his son would not come near to him. And Mrs. Boucher added, "He seemed to speak, sir, as if he would have given a great deal to see you. And I do think he loved you, sir, though he was rather hasty at times. But then sons ought to bear with their father: I am sure I did with my poor old mother, who was bed-stricken for years."

Villiers groaned aloud, and shuddered, as he still stood with his face covered with his hands, and resting on the mantel-piece. He lifted it after a pause, during which Mrs. Boucher sat with her hands folded in her black silk apron, and asked her if——he dared not name his father; and checked himself to say, "Had there been much suffering?"

Mrs. Boucher shook her head mournfully, and once more proceeded. "He had been much disturbed at nights. A servant, who slept over-head, had often been kept awake by his groaning; and there were sometimes hard words from Pearce, as if he were threatening instead of comforting him.

One night he had been taken very ill, and Mrs. Boucher had been summoned to assist. It was a long time before the doctor came, and Mr. Pearce, who seemed extremely impatient for his arrival, had left the room to hasten the messenger.

“And then,” continued Mrs. Boucher, “as the poor old gentleman looked up, and only saw the other nurse in the room, he made signs to me to send her away, which I did; and then, though he could scarcely move, he put his hands so-together, and shook his head. It was the most piteous sight I ever saw. He was so pale and thin, and his hair quite white. And then he made signs to me to give him his keys, which I did, and he pointed out one, and making me lay my ear almost down to his lips, he whispered, ‘When I am gone, give this to *him*—you know whom I mean. He has not been kind; but I won’t be hard to him: let them do what they choose.’ And just then Mr. Pearce came back, and was quite angry that I had been in the room alone. He took up the keys, as they lay on the bed, and I never saw them since. Hark, sir! there is some one at the door.”

The knock was repeated, and Mrs. Boucher bustled up to make way for Pearce himself, and another person, seemingly a notary. It was with a face of almost savage exultation, scarcely intended to be stifled, that Pearce announced to Villiers that he was come to seal up some drawers. Villiers himself, almost forgetful as he had been of any other circumstance, in the thought of his father, was now aroused to demand by what right he entered on this office. And nothing further was needed to induce Pearce to enter at once on the real object of his intrusion; and desiring his companion to open a black portfolio, he placed before Villiers a formal document, which he requested him to read. Villiers

did read it—read it with his eyes almost blinded with tears, for he saw his father's signature, shaken and abrupt, as of a person in the extremity of illness. It was formal, however, correct, without a flaw, duly signed, and witnessed. Villiers knew nothing of law, but, to all appearance, it assured him that the menace held out by his father had been fulfilled, and that he was a beggar. All that could be left away was given to the Jesuits' College at Rome, with the exception of a large legacy to Pearce. The landed property was given to Lady Eleanor, and Villiers himself not mentioned. He was a beggar; and the effect was, for the moment, stunning. That which for months he had thought of, and spoken of as possible, was realized; but reality is a very different thing from imagination—and he found it so.

It required, however, but little time for him to recover himself sufficiently to return the document, and to request that he might be left alone, and not subjected to intrusion upon questions of business at such a moment; and Pearce retired, taking care, as he looked him in the face, to lift up a mass of hair from his own forehead, and to exhibit a scar, which had been there ever since the evening when Villiers had last left his father's house at Naples.

It was a dreary and fearful interval which ensued between that hour and the day when his father's remains were deposited in the grave, according to the rites of the Romish church. One person only was admitted to him—Beattie, who was still at Rome, in recovered health, and to whose judgment Villiers willingly committed the task of making the necessary inquiries into the validity of the will. There were moments of stupor, of amazement, such as falls upon the mind when some great shock has changed the whole face of the world around us.

Then came attempts to realize the present and the future ; then some object before him brought back all the past : and, for the moment, the present seemed a dream, till the reality once more flashed upon him. At times came a conflict between his conscience and his suffering. Angry thoughts would rise ; the recollection of past ill-treatment ; efforts to excuse himself ; then recollections of his own joys, and his own sorrows ; then he was once more sitting on the rocky seat, or under the shade of the vine-trellissed cottage, till he started up to find himself in his dark, dreary chamber. Once, only, the vision returned to him again, and again bringing something like peace — the vision of his motherless child ; and the thought that there was still a centre, round which his affections might gather — a being for whom he might toil, though in poverty and pain—who might look up to him, and love him, and cling to him, and cherish him when he was old and in sickness. But here a pang shot across him ; for what hope could he have of meriting that filial duty towards himself, which he had himself denied to his own parent. Every thing ended in remorse ; and even remorse was sweet, for it was real, and true : it bore on it no delusion. And as he bowed himself to the ground, and prayed, Villiers began to feel what religion is ; he felt it in its first beginning—sorrow and shame.

He left his room but once. It was after everyone in the house had gone to bed ; and even the nurses, who were sitting in the chamber of the dead, were appalled when they marked the agony in his countenance, as he opened the door and motioned them to withdraw. They listened at the outside, and heard him draw the bolt and prostrate himself on the ground, and then all was silent ; only at times a suppressed groan reached them : but they dared not enter. And the cold grey dawn struggled in

through the curtained windows before he opened the door and returned to his own room. But from that night Villiers was an altered man. Even Beattie was surprised to see the calmness and self-control, the almost childlike gentleness with which he did and suffered all that was necessary in the distressing scenes through which he was obliged to pass. He made only one request—that Pearce might be prevented from coming near him. Every thing else, which, in a former day, would have galled and stung him to the quick, he now submitted to patiently and meekly, as under punishment—a punishment which he recognised as just. He requested only a single alteration in the arrangement of the funeral; but it was intended to express more respect and honour for the dead. And during the last melancholy ceremonial, except the strong and almost convulsive grasp with which he kept his hand within his bosom, clasped on that which Beattie knew to be a little golden cross, Beattie himself would have observed little in his manner but quiet resignation and sorrow. Villiers, even in his youth, was no friend to scenes and exhibitions of emotion.

The second evening after all was over he was sitting alone in Beattie's room, reading—reading, because he was expecting every moment that Beattie would return and bring him information of the circumstances relating to the will. Not indeed that this had ever formed a prominent feature in the bitter thoughts which forced themselves on him; but when at times an almost Quixotic feeling of contempt for wealth, and insensibility to his worldly position, had obtruded themselves, the thought of his child came across him—of his duty to others—and of the necessity for ascertaining and enforcing right wherever it seemed to have been violated. And he admitted with Beattie the obligation of

obtaining sufficient information as to the validity of the document. As Beattie's step was heard coming up the stairs, a slight pulsation of the heart revealed to Villiers that his composure was not entire indifference ; but it ceased the moment he caught sight of his friend's face, and saw in it that the case was hopeless. Nothing, Beattie explained to him, could be more correct or formal than the will. He had indeed made inquiries of the servants ; and from them had ascertained much which Mrs. Boucher had stated to Villiers himself, and which awakened no little suspicion of unfair influence having been employed to obtain the present distribution of the property. Hesitatingly and carefully watching the effect of the suggestion on Villiers's countenance, Beattie added that litigation might be possible ; but Villiers shook his head reluctantly. And Beattie then added that he had suggested the possibility of this to the parties now interested in the will, and had not hesitated to express an opinion that it might be overturned ; but he had been met by a threat—a threat of disclosures most painfully affecting the poor General's character ; and Villiers impatiently stopped him, exclaiming, “Never ! never !”

He sat down without delay to write two letters,—one to Lord Claremont, to inform him that he had no intention of endeavouring to disturb the will, and making one request which he knew would be granted, that he might be allowed to possess the picture of his mother which hung in her bed-chamber at the Priory. The other letter was to his uncle in Yorkshire, an old, penurious, singular character, who possessed, however, some parliamentary interest, and being himself unmarried, had often shown symptoms of attachment to his nephew, even to the extent of contemplating him as the heir of

his property. Villiers asked of him nothing but to obtain some situation or commission in the army, which might enable him to support himself. And the letters sealed, he took leave of Beattie for the night, promising to see him the next day before he left Rome for Naples, to make the necessary arrangements for placing his child in some fit and eligible care.

CHAP. XVIII.

It was not, perhaps, till his arrival in his own room at the hotel, that Villiers for the first time in his life felt what poverty was. He was to part with his servant. And as his servant took his wages, and a donation far beyond what he might have expected, Villiers was pleased with the honest hearty way in which the man thanked him, as having always been a kind and good master. He had tasted scarcely any thing that day, and his spirit having returned with the removal of suspense and the necessity of exertion, he would have asked for something to eat, but the thought came to him of his child, and of the necessity of depriving himself of comforts for the sake of that dear being, and he checked the order which he had been on the point of giving. His servant insisted on remaining to pack his trunks; and Villiers, who had been nurtured in habits which made him peculiarly sensitive to the distinctions of rank, and to the refinements of life, once more felt the reality of his altered position when he gave orders that his portmanteau should be carried to the place from which the vehicle of a courier, with whom he had engaged a place, was to start the next morning. He was young, and still amenable to false shame; and as, accidentally, he met an English acquaintance just as he was mounting the vehicle, and noticed the curiosity and hauteur with which his friend's glass was levelled at him, and the cold bow (his circumstances being known) with

which his own distant recognition was returned, a momentary chill, followed by indignation, came over him at the thought of the heartless world with which he was now to grapple ; but it was momentary only. Once more he remembered that he had been sinful, and was under punishment, and his equanimity returned.

Side by side with his humbler companion, on whom but a short time before Villiers would have looked, not indeed with contempt, but with something of wonder and curiosity as a being of a different species (for Villiers had been nurtured in some of the worst habits of an exclusive English aristocracy), now he exchanged the little courtesies of fellow-travellers, and, notwithstanding the oppression on his spirits, endeavoured to ask him questions, and even to take an interest in the willingness with which the honest and sensible man opened to him his ideas and history, till he came to explain that he had engaged in a life which he did not like, and had sacrificed much that he enjoyed, even postponing a marriage with a young person to whom he was engaged, and all to enable him to support an aged father, who had lost everything by imprudence. But as he came to this part of his tale he observed that Villiers had buried himself in his cloak, and was sitting with his eyes closed and his brows knit, as if in great pain ; and with a tact not uncommon even to uncultivated minds which are familiar with the world, he contrived to stop, and, as the vehicle was mounting a hill, to jump down and walk by the side, leaving his companion to his thoughts ; and those thoughts were, as if at every step an eye were opening and a tongue were planted in every mouth, to witness and proclaim one crying sin to a remorseful heart. Just as the vehicle reached the top of the road which crosses the Monte Albano, and Gui-

seppe, the courier, was about to jump into it again, a light calash drove rapidly round the corner behind them, and nearly grazing the wheels of the other carriage, galloped on, as if in great anxiety to reach the next stage before them. Villiers himself had scarcely noticed it, he was so plunged in thought. But Guiseppe made some remark on the speed with which the horses were going, and also on the sinister looks of a single traveller who had ensconced himself in the corner, and, as he passed Villiers's vehicle, had thrown a large red handkerchief over his face, which Guiseppe had only been enabled to see by observing it peering from the glass behind, as if unwilling to be recognised, and yet anxious to observe.

"I never knew," he muttered to himself, as he once more seated himself by Villiers's side, "I never knew any good connected with such quick travelling; there is always some mischief before or behind." But Villiers made no reply. And the rest of the journey was spent in silence. Guiseppe understood that his companion was in distress and sorrow; and respectfully forbore to intrude on him, except by little attentions which Villiers noticed with kindness, and which left upon his mind the valuable lesson for after-life — that no class is so humble in which courtesy and benevolence, and even delicacy of feeling, do not exist. It did much to re-awaken a sympathy between himself and his inferior fellow-creatures. Meanwhile, as he receded from Rome, the sufferings of the past week began to soften and die away under the influence of the open air, the beautiful scenery, and the rapid motion. His thoughts wandered forwards; and though he dreaded the bitter recollections which awaited him at Naples, the thought of his child, whom he was going to rejoin, and from henceforth intended

to devote himself to rear, gained on him every hour. It was the star still left in the horror of thick darkness which had fallen on him — the spark from which a fuller light might hereafter be kindled — the centre round which alone upon earth his memories and his hopes might gather, and find happiness and duty still. He thought of it as lying in its dear mother's arms, as he had first beheld it; as learning to stretch out its little arms to him, even though unable to speak; as laughing brightly at his approach; as playing with the hair of his head, and crying to be taken by him and tossed; as reviving many a little trace of that face, pensive and exquisitely beautiful, which had first entranced him; and as about to become an image — of himself, Villiers would have said, had he dared to conclude the sentence: but then came the consciousness of his sin, of his own undutifulness and cruelty (he would have used no lighter word); and he could only breathe a prayer that his child might not be the image of himself.

It was with such a thought in his heart that the vehicle drove into the dirty narrow street of Fondi. He had passed it more than once before, and was well acquainted with the formalities attending passports. It was therefore with some surprise that he found Guiseppe detained in the police-office for a considerable time, and with still greater that he saw him come out accompanied by one of the officers, who informed Villiers that there was an informality in his papers, and that it was impossible for him to proceed till they had been examined further. There was a singular hesitation and strangeness in the man's manner; and when Villiers begged to know the nature of the informality, he could only reply, vaguely and impatiently, that there was suspicion, irregularity, and that there must be some delay.

“How long?” inquired Villiers.

“Perhaps three days,” was the answer.

At another time, Villiers’s indignation would have vented itself abruptly, and not very wisely. But his temper had been schooled, as well as other defects in his character; and after endeavouring to remonstrate calmly, and to explain, but to no purpose, he took leave of Guiseppe, and removing his portmanteau, submitted to be shown to a miserable little albergo, there to content himself with remaining until the difficulty could be removed.

On looking round the wretched room, which was all the accommodation supplied him, he was himself surprised to find how little such external appearances affect us when the mind is occupied with either deep sorrow or deep joy; especially how estranged it becomes even from the thought of them, when there is a consciousness within of having acted wrong — of being under punishment. Punishment in a palace is a mockery; and to feel that he was suffering a punishment, — to resolve on bearing it manfully, and patiently, and gratefully, and to look up to the hand which inflicted it with the prayer, that such a spirit might be perfected within him, was becoming every hour more and more the temper of his mind.

In the evening he strolled out to relieve his thoughts, painfully depressed and overwrought by several hours spent among papers, and arrangements which were full of bitterness for the future as well as for the past, and with only one bright thought of consolation — the thought of his child. As he returned into the narrow dirty street of the little town, close by the Dogana, a crowd was collected round a door. A few faces seemingly more adventurous than the rest were prying into a hovel; but the most part with countenances indicative of alarm and conster-

nation, mixed with that curiosity and fascination of terror which is so common in uneducated minds, were standing aloof, and spreading the news of some disaster to every passer-by. On Villiers inquiring the cause, he found that the first case of a fever, which had been for some time anticipated, had just broken out, and one of the persons employed in the Dogana had been its victim. The poor fellow was alarmingly ill. But no one dared to approach him. And it was only on Villiers going into the miserable place, where he lay, and summoning the terrified by-standers to assist him in moving the sufferer, and in providing him with some comforts, that they ventured to risk the infection. It was some relief to his mind to be engaged actively in a work of charity. The tending by a sick bed brought back to him the memory of two other sick beds, both of them associated with remorse. In this case there could be none. And as the only old woman who could be found to remain with the sufferer as nurse was timid and inexperienced, Villiers himself sat up with the sick man during the night. The poor woman, who was a Roman Catholic, and had, therefore, been brought up in pious horror of heretics, among whom she had been taught to class the members of the English Church, was surprised to see him spend no little part of the time on his knees. She had been told that Protestants never knelt in prayer—that they never prayed at all; and her amazement was great. The morning came, and the patient was better. His gratitude was intense to Villiers; and in expressing it, he added to him a warning, which surprised him, but to which he paid little attention. He told him that his detention had been brought about apparently by a traveller, who had preceded him by a few hours, and

who had had some secret conference with the chief of the office, and he hinted to him the necessity of being cautious, if he had any secret enemy, or was conscious of offences against the government. Villiers smiled, and thanked the poor fellow for his advice; but did not think it worth while to make further inquiries of him respecting a suggestion so obviously unfounded. Nor, indeed, could the man have given him any further information than the vague notion which he had gathered from some incidental remarks of his superior. He was, indeed, too ill to be communicative, and though better, when Villiers the next day took leave of him, on receiving his passport, and with it apologies for the delay, nothing more passed between them.

It was a bright and joyous afternoon, as Villiers once more re-entered Naples. The sun was dancing on the blue waters of the bay. The fringe of glittering suburbs, which stretched round its magnificent curve, flashed on the eye like marble. Vesuvius towered in the distance, curling up a thin wreath of smoke upon the golden sky. The road was full of gay-dressed peasants, with their brilliant many-coloured costumes and antique ornaments of gold and pearls. The lazzaroni, capped and buttoned, were lying about, basking their swarthy muscular limbs among the painted stalls of water-melons and summer fruits. The Chiaia was swarming with equipages, and gay boats were skimming about the bay. The whole spectacle was luxury and enjoyment. But to Villiers, over it all, there hung a black, motionless, fearful veil like a pall. He sat back in the humble conveyance with his eyes closed, his brow knit, his lips compressed in anguish, and a weight pressing upon his chest, which compelled him every now and then, to the alarm of his fellow-travellers, to heave a deep groan, and stretch his head

out of the window, as if gasping for breath. He had answered so gently to their first inquiries, if he was ill, and yet with such firmness, that they at last permitted him to remain unnoticed. The vehicle stopped on the Chiaia ; and Villiers, muffling himself up, called to him, from among a group of fishermen, an old familiar face, which recognised him at once. He bade the man see his portmanteau removed ; and having sunk down in a little boat, which was drawn up on the beach, they were soon launched upon the bay. The honest fisherman saw, and partly understood, the cause of his evident anguish ; and though he remained silent, a bystander might have seen him dash away something from his eyes as he looked upon Villiers, and observed the tears streaming down through the hands, in which his face was buried. He held his arm for Villiers to rest on, as he rose to step from the boat, at the little moorings, close by the steps in the cliff, under the trellissed cottage, and the seat of rock ; and Villiers caught at it, for he was ready to fall. But as his foot touched the ground, a better thought seemed to nerve him, and he sprang up the narrow path, impatient till he could see all that now remained to him of joy and hope upon earth, and could clasp his child to his bosom. He faltered for one moment as he passed the seat in the rock ; but the next he was at the door of the cottage. It was closed. He rapped, that Marie, the nurse, who had the care of the child, might hear him ; but Marie was evidently out. He looked in at the window, but could see no one. The cradle was there, but it was empty. Once more he rapped, but to no effect ; and while waiting in expectation of an answer, he observed that the flower-bed in the front had been trampled on, seemingly by men's feet. He was startled by a little cry of surprise

and dismay from a young girl, whom he recognised as the daughter of a neighbouring peasant, and who endeavoured to run away when she saw him. But he compelled her to come to him; and on inquiring for Marie, the nurse, he could at first obtain no answer. Evidently there was something to conceal. At last the girl stammered out that Marie was at their own house. And Villiers hurried to it. A scream of dismay from the poor woman was the first greeting. The few incoherent words which he could extract from her were sufficient to inform him that his last hope was gone. Two nights before, a false alarm of fire had been given at the door of Marie's cottage. Startled from her sleep, she rushed out with the child in her arms: two men, who had given the alarm, met her at the door, offered to hold the child while she ran back to secure her little property; and while she was hastily collecting what was most necessary to save, they had disappeared. A small boat had been seen moored at the bottom of the steps, which was never seen again. Every spot had been searched, and all the neighbouring cottages—every inquiry made—but the child was lost.

It was past twelve on the following night, when a man and his wife, who had been employed at times in the establishment of General Villiers while he was at Naples, and who still lived in the house to take care of it while untenanted and unfurnished, were coming home from a rustic fête. As they came within the light of a lamp which hung before an image of the Virgin—the same lamp which had first revealed to Villiers that face which he never forgot—they saw a figure leaning against the wall, the hat slouched over the face, and the legs bent as if unable to support themselves. It was evidently a person ill. He moaned as they approached; and

suffered them to raise his hat, and to reveal a face ghastly with suffering of body and of mind, but which they still were able to recognise as their young master's. He scarcely replied to their astonished inquiries; and, on their asking if they could take him home, he sank down, muttering faintly that he had no home. A passer-by aided them in raising him, and carrying him to the house; and, on the arrival of a physician, they learnt that he was in a high fever — partly the result of infection, from his watching over the sick man at Fondi, but aggravated greatly by agony of mind, and the violent exertion with which he had exhausted himself in endeavouring to trace his child.

We need not dwell upon the days and weeks which followed — on the wanderings of mind upon past scenes — the incoherent ravings — the violence with which it became necessary to coerce him — the wretchedness of every thing around him, in a large deserted house, with none but its two poor inmates to soothe and nurse him; and then the dreadful dawning of returning reason, only to reveal to him again the misery of his lot. Providentially, with the passing of the crisis there came some relief to him in the person of his friend Beattie, who had traced him out, and followed him from Rome. He watched by him at night; held his forehead when splitting with pain; administered his medicines; read to him, prayed with him and for him; led his thoughts quietly and gently to see the dispensations of an overruling goodness in their true light; opened to him future prospects of usefulness and duty; and, by his simple and unaffected piety, wrought upon the mind of his friend even more than Macarthy had wrought with all his brilliancy and force of genius.

It was one evening, after Villiers, leaning on

Beattie's arm, had returned from his first attempt to venture into the open air, that he asked Beattie if he might now be allowed to look at some letters which had arrived for him, and which his physician had prohibited him from reading before. He felt stronger, and able to bear it; and Beattie gave them to him. One was from Lady Eleanor. She did not say that she was compelled to write herself, because Lord Claremont had sternly refused to do so: but with high-minded, yet feminine dignity, she expressed her full conviction that the disposal of General Villiers's property had been influenced by the wrong suggestions of others; and her earnest desire that, if possible, the will might be set aside, and the estates revert to Villiers, instead of coming to herself. Villiers smiled as he pointed out the paragraph to Beattie. But the first lines which he wrote, when able to take a pen in his hand, were to express, not only his admiration and gratitude for his cousin's noble disinterestedness, but the impossibility of his permitting any change to take place in arrangements, in which he felt it his duty patiently to acquiesce. Another letter was from his uncle, dated from England, and informing him that he had obtained a commission for him in the army, as the only thing which he could procure. Another was from the Horse Guards, ordering him to join the regiment, to which he had been appointed, in Canada, without delay. And the fourth was from Pearce, with some insolent inquiry about a matter of business, which Villiers read patiently, and replied to briefly without a single expression of indignation at the insult.

The letters read, he raised his eyes, and looking steadfastly upon Beattie, told him that he was now ready and able to bear his answer to one more inquiry. Every search had been made; the assist-

ance of the police had been obtained ; communications had been made in every direction. Had any trace whatever been discovered of the child?

Beattie shook his head mournfully : and Villiers, clasping his hands, and closing his eyes for a few minutes, during which his lips were moving in silent prayer, endeavoured to compose himself to entire submission. As he opened his eyes again, he found Beattie was kneeling by his side, looking on him with the deepest affection and commiseration, and prepared to pray with him, as the best mode of soothing and comforting him. And by an hour afterwards Villiers was able to turn his attention to matters which required immediate arrangement, and to prepare composedly and steadily to enter on the new line of life to which he seemed to be called.

CHAP. XIX.

TWELVE years passed away ; and we may pass from the sick bed of Villiers to the saloon of the English ambassador at Florence. It was brilliantly illuminated for a state dinner on a Friday. The tables glittered with plate. Wax lights in alabaster vases threw a soft moonlight radiance on gorgeous pictures, and marble statues, and jewelled guests. The cool plash of fountains, amidst pillared porticoes and perfumed flowers, mixed lullingly with soft strains of music. And the exquisite taste of the noble ambassador, who was a notorious profligate, threw round the scene an air of refinement and fastidiousness, which almost oppressed enjoyment. The gorgeously-dressed domestics moved in silence on the velvet carpets. Even the creaking of a door or the derangement of a dish seemed to inflict pain on the sensitiveness of the voluptuous host. Every one spoke in a low voice, as if a sound beyond a whisper was an infringement on the solemnity of the festival ; when the countenance of the illustrious ambassador was seen to assume a haughty gloom, as he observed a very ill-disguised yawn distorting the countenance of one of his youngest guests in the regimentals of a distinguished corps. Captain O'Brien really was extremely tired. He had enjoyed, or rather suffered some little experience of state dinners, when aide-de-camp to his uncle, a late Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. But with all his habits of society and good breeding the young vivacious Irishman was not proof against the som-

nolent influence of the ambassador's grandeur. He endeavoured to rouse himself by obtaining the attention of a very lovely and elegant woman who sat next him, and whose conversation had been hitherto engrossed by an elderly white-headed gentleman on the other side of her. He observed that she refused every dish presented to her; and the second time that O'Brien offered her some preparation of meat, she asked for vegetables only. O'Brien trusted she was not ill; and with perfect unaffectedness she replied that she did not eat meat on fast-days. O'Brien for a moment opened his dark animated eyes with some degree of incompetency to understand her.

"I thought I had the pleasure," he said, "of addressing an English lady, or, though we are aliens in Ireland, may I not say a countrywoman?"

The lady smiled, and only replied that he was not mistaken; but that English ladies might be Catholics.

O'Brien coloured, and apologised.

"We are commanded by our Church," she continued, "to practise these little self-denials; and I have often thought it might be very beneficial if other religious communities enjoined them likewise. But English Protestants, I believe, have entirely discarded them."

O'Brien knew little either of Roman Catholics or of English Protestants, in matters of theology.

"One person," he replied, "I knew, who was a Protestant, and who always fasted on Friday. I knew it well, for it was connected with matters of deep interest to myself. By the by," he said, forgetting the solemn quiescence which reigned around him, and speaking across the table to an old military officer covered with orders, "how delighted I am to

hear that Villiers has come into possession of his property again. I saw it in the papers this morning."

The ambassador's face assumed a deeper gloom than before. The old General shily answered "Yes," and coughed, as if to intimate that the subject might as well be dropped. But the warm-hearted young Irishman had fallen on a subject very near his heart.

"Have you heard the circumstances?" he continued. "The property was left away by his father to his cousin, and his cousin has given it back to him; and there was some statement of a paper being found in a cabinet. But one thing is certain, that Lady Eleanor has behaved most nob——"

But before he could finish the word, the ambassador, near whom he was sitting, in a very cold and formal voice of condemnation, begged to introduce him to Lady Eleanor Howard, who was sitting by his side. O'Brien's fine features were once more suffused with a very becoming flush. But Lady Eleanor soon relieved him from his momentary embarrassment.

"Mr. Villiers, I presume," she said, "is a friend of yours."

"A very dear friend," said O'Brien.

"You must not then think too well of his cousin," said Lady Eleanor. "I am sorry to say she has had no opportunity of acting nobly; and the newspapers, those miscalled sources of information, have, in this case, as in most others, been egregiously wrong."

O'Brien bowed, and was prepared to make some lively compliment. But Lady Eleanor, with quietness and simplicity, continued:—

"As Mr. Villiers's friend, you will be happy to hear that he is in Florence."

O'Brien almost clapped his hands; but a look from the ambassador froze him into quietude.

"He arrived this morning," said Lady Eleanor, "and will, I hope, meet us here this evening."

"And may I ask," said O'Brien, "if the statement respecting the recovery of the estate is true?"

"It is true," was the reply, "in its principal facts. But the recovery is simply owing to the law. General Villiers, it was only recently discovered, had no power to alienate the English estates. He had overlooked a codicil in his grandfather's will; and to me it has been a great satisfaction that they should still be retained in the original line."

"And there was no paper, then," asked O'Brien, "found in an old chest? The whole story sounded so like a romance, that I distrusted it from the first."

"There was a paper found by Mr. Beattie, an intimate friend of Mr. Villiers, but found some years back, which implied that the General's will had been made under undue influence; and this probably would have had the effect of overturning the will itself, if it had been brought into litigation. But you are Mr. Villiers's friend, and you will not be surprised to hear that he refused to take advantage of it. There were circumstances connected with it, which would have involved further discussion of matters, which it was more honourable to the memory of those who are gone to preserve in privacy."

"How like him!" exclaimed O'Brien. "Lady Eleanor must pardon me if I intrude such questions; but Villiers is the best and dearest friend I have in the world. And they laugh at me for raving whenever he is mentioned."

Lady Eleanor was interested in her companion's enthusiasm.

"Is it possible," he continued, lowering his voice,

“to tell you a very long story without drawing the attention of this whole solemn meeting?”

“If you are repeating what is good of him,” replied Lady Eleanor, “you need not be alarmed. I fear, generally speaking, it is only scandal which attracts attention.”

“And may I begin at the beginning?” asked O’Brien, laughingly.

Lady Eleanor prepared to listen, and O’Brien, relieved from his ennui, delighted at having obtained the attention of his fair neighbour, and still more at being indulged with the full expression of his admiration and affection for his friend, proceeded, with all the natural eloquence, energy, and vivacity of a well-educated Irish gentleman, to recount his story : —

“We were quartered,” he said, “in Canada some years since, when Villiers first joined the regiment. At that time, and in our own regiment, duelling was a prevailing fashion. Scarcely any one was allowed to join us without being compelled to engage in this, which now I will call detestable, practice of murder. But then I thought differently. When Villiers first came out he was just recovering from illness, and evidently in great distress of mind. At that time I did not know the cause; but he was allowed for some weeks to remain much to himself. And young and thoughtless as we were, we felt it right to give him some indulgence. But you must be aware how little young men of high spirits, and thinking only of amusement, can bear with melancholy and gloom in others. Villiers was always gentlemanly, kind, and considerate, but he was reserved and depressed; and there was a superiority of mind and manner about him which we construed as haughtiness. A month or two passed, and we became impatient of his continued retirement. In particular, we observed that he never joined the mess on a Fri-

day; and as this was a convenient day for parties, his absence became marked. I need not say how soon, where offence is sought, offence may be taken. And I, as one of the youngest and most hot-brained—I will add a stronger word, as one of the most unprincipled of the party—boasted that I would compel him to attend the mess or insult him. It was not difficult to find an opportunity. Lady Eleanor will have no wish to hear details, of which I shall always be ashamed. But I did, (and O'Brien lowered his voice, and with the colour mounting to his face, hung down his head as he proceeded,) I did at the mess-table make observations which he could not avoid overhearing, and which led to a gentle expostulation on his part, to some insulting reply on mine; and at last, when he rose to leave the room, to language for which, in the ordinary code of society, no reparation could be given but bloodshed.

“I was sitting in my room late that night, having made all necessary preparations in case I should fall, and wondering that I had not yet received any communication to fix the meeting for the morrow, when I heard a rap at the door, and drawing myself up to receive, as I expected, Villiers's friend, to my extreme astonishment I saw Villiers himself. He was perfectly calm and self-possessed; and there was a gentleness and dignity in his manner which gave to him such a superiority over me, that I could only escape from it by rudeness. ‘I am come,’ he said, ‘Mr. O'Brien’ (for I was then only a lieutenant), ‘to express to you my forgiveness for your having insulted me to-day as you have done: I am willing to believe that the act escaped you in a moment of thoughtlessness. But I am come also to express to you with my own lips that no such act, whether proceeding from thoughtlessness or deliberation, will induce me, I trust, to comply with that false code of ho-

nour which thinks it possible to wipe out disgrace only by committing either suicide or murder. When you have been visited as I have been, you will feel, I cannot doubt, that there is another code, far higher and far more awful in its chastisements than that of human society, and to which we are all amenable. By this code I am not only bound to abstain from seeking your life in revenge for an injury offered to me, but I am bound to give you my free and hearty forgiveness, which I now tender you ; and to seek the first opportunity, in some legitimate way, of evincing that this forgiveness is not one of words only, and that my present act is not the act of a coward. Until that opportunity is presented I must be content to remain under the stigma which your act has thrown on me. I perceive,' he continued, as he observed me about to indulge in some expression of irritation and contempt, ' I perceive that it will be useless to prolong this explanation.' And before I could give vent to my violence he had withdrawn.

" ' Coward ! hypocrite ! fool ! ' were the first words which came to my lips. They were repeated by the greater part of the mess, when the story became known. Villiers himself was of course shunned and sent to Coventry ; and the commanding officer was only prevented from showing similar feeling by his private connection with Villiers's family. In the mean time Villiers retired from our society, without seeming to shun it. I thought his manner was that of a man struggling against a violent temptation, and suffering under bitter mortification. But he was calm and patient in his exterior, and refused to notice the little acts of insolence and contempt with which the youngest among us now ventured to molest him. He bore with it for at least six weeks. At the end of that time my corps was ordered on

an expedition. Our business was to occupy Newtown height, which commanded the river at Toronto, and the rebels were in great force underneath it. I shall not easily forget the march we had, in the dead of night, through the woods, and a morass in which we sank up to our knees, expecting every moment that the enemy would fall upon us. It was the most perilous expedition of the whole war. Here was the height—there the river—here we passed through the forest.” And O’Brien, once embarked in his military manœuvres, endeavoured to assist Lady Eleanor’s comprehension by ranging bonbons and comfitures on the table, much, if we may venture the pun, to the discomfiture of the refined ambassador, and not a little to Lady Eleanor’s disappointment, whose thoughts were far less engaged with the military tactics than with the anecdote of Villiers.

“Just as we were on the point,” continued O’Brien, “of debouching from the forest (debouching, you should know, means issuing out, and is a military phrase,)—just here, by this green bonbon, you see, the alarm was given, and in an instant we found ourselves surrounded. I had advanced before the rest, and was cut off from behind. Four of the rebels fell on me. I received a wound across my sword-hand—here it is” (and he held up his hand), “which completely disabled me; and I was on the point of being cut down between them, when one of my assailants was cloven across the head with a sabre-blow. An officer threw himself before me, bidding me make my retreat, and he would cover it. A second assailant was stretched by him on the ground. But before any of our own men, whom he had rallied, could come to our assistance, I received another blow, under which I fell to the ground, stunned and senseless. When I reco-

vered my consciousness, I was lying on a bed of leaves in a deep thicket, the light of morning just dawning, and only one person with me, who was employed in bandaging my wounds,—and that person was Villiers. I was perishing with thirst. He had procured some water in a hollow stone, and some biscuit, which I afterwards found was all that he had for himself. And when, with a mixed sensation of resentment, indignation, and shame, I interrogated him as to the reason of his presence, he charged me to be silent, for that we were still near the enemy's outposts, and that we must wait till night before we could venture to move."

"What had brought him on the expedition?"

"I found subsequently that he had learned, after we had left our quarters, that we should probably be surprised; had obtained permission from the commanding officer to follow with a few men; had come to my personal rescue: and when the rest had been compelled to retire, he had thrown himself, with me, into the wood, had dismissed those who carried me, and had remained himself watching by me till a reinforcement could be sent, and I could be removed. And, now, will Lady Eleanor excuse a stranger, if he has taken up her time with a tale of such a man?"

"And you both escaped?" asked Lady Eleanor.

"We lay covered all that day, not daring to stir; and in the evening a movement was made by our troops, which compelled the rebels to decamp, and we escaped to head-quarters."

"And from that day," continued Lady Eleanor, "I presume, you date your friendship with Mr. Villiers?"

"No," replied O'Brien, "not from that day. It was too noble, too oppressive kindness. What with shame, and what with gratitude, I could not feel to

him as a friend. I wished to apologise to him publicly, but he would not hear of it. Of course, he was received among us again ; and every one spoke of him as a fine, noble-hearted fellow. But those who have injured seldom forgive ; and I could scarcely forgive him, even for saving my life by an act of heroism which made me so immeasurably his inferior. And he knew this ; and never sought to do me any more kindnesses till I was taken seriously ill : and then, when all my other noisy companions deserted me, or only came to pay a hurried visit, and excuse themselves for not staying above a few minutes, I was left alone, terribly depressed, and would have given worlds for any society. He never came near me, however, till one day the nurse begged him to come, and said she knew I should like it, — and I did like it. If he had been my own brother, he could not have been more kind, more affectionate. As soon as he found that I took pleasure in seeing him, he had his bed moved into the next room, and was with me constantly. And from that time he has been my friend. Such a friend," he continued, looking on Lady Eleanor with his large full eye suffused for a moment, " as — But I must not weary you with my enthusiasm."

Lady Eleanor was not wearied ; she was any thing but wearied : but there was one question which she longed to ask, but scarcely dared.

" My little observation respecting fasting," she said, " has brought from you a very interesting anecdote. Mr. Villiers was then a Protestant ?"

" Oh, yes," said O'Brien ; " he never was any thing else. But he used to do a number of things which I am afraid are not very common among Protestants. I know he associated very much with an American bishop, near whom we were stationed ; and I suspect what he saw in America very much confirmed him

in many of his opinions. I have private reasons for knowing that he regularly set apart a tenth of his income, and it was very small, for charitable and religious purposes ; and he often urged me to do the same. He used regularly to stay at church."

And the young officer, in using the ordinary expression applied to the most solemn act of Christian devotion, little thought of the censure it implied upon the great mass of Christian congregations who do not stay, but go away.

"I have known him," continued O'Brien, "ride twenty miles for the purpose on a Saturday, and return on the Monday. He had regular hours when he used to disappear ; and even in the middle of the day I am convinced that he was in the habit of praying. I was young and thoughtless," continued O'Brien, "and have been worse than thoughtless ; but I have learnt from him lessons which will be a blessing to me to the end of my life."

"His Excellency will drink wine with you, sir," interrupted the plumed chasseur of the noble host, whose indignation at his young guest's vivacity was considerably mollified when he observed the attention paid by Lady Eleanor, whom his fastidious taste recognised as a model of refinement, to O'Brien's animated conversation. The interruption, however, did not prevent O'Brien from returning to his favourite theme.

"I fear," he said, "that with all his goodness he is, and has been, very unhappy. I rarely saw him smile."

"Perhaps," said Lady Eleanor, "his unhappiness may have been the cause of his goodness?"

"It was not goodness," replied O'Brien, "if I might trust his own account, which caused his unhappiness. He never recovered the loss of his child and wife."

"Wife!" repeated Lady Eleanor, thrown off her guard, and her eye lighting up as if a weight had been removed from her mind. O'Brien looked surprised.

"Perhaps," he said, "I am betraying confidence. But I know what falsehoods are often circulated. He certainly was married in Italy to a young person, whose portrait in a moment of great distress he once showed me. She must have been exquisitely beautiful. Poor thing! she died of a decline within a short time after her marriage, and the child was lost in some extraordinary way."

He was silent, and Lady Eleanor would have willingly induced him to continue, but knew not how, without betraying the deep interest which she felt in the tale.

"She was the daughter," added O'Brien, "of an officer in the Spanish army, of high rank, but who had been driven from his country through political disturbances in which he had become involved."

"I had heard something of this," replied Lady Eleanor; "but I had fancied she was of low birth."

"No, certainly not," answered O'Brien. "They were reduced to great poverty, and the father supported himself by his own hands; but there was certainly good blood."

Once more there was a pause.

"He seems," said O'Brien, "to have doted on his child, though it was so young. I shall never forget a scene I witnessed, and which led to his telling me these facts; for otherwise he was very reserved, and rarely spoke of himself or his own affairs, even to his most intimate friends."

Lady Eleanor begged him to proceed.

"There was a young soldier," he continued, "in the regiment, who was very ill-conducted and dissipated; and after a number of reprimands and

slighter punishments, it became necessary to have him flogged. Villiers happened to be the officer who was ordered to superintend the execution of the sentence — never a very pleasant task ; but though most gentle in himself, he was remarkably firm when it was necessary to punish. I have seen him do things, without moving a muscle, which our greatest disciplinarians would have shrunk from. In this case something led him to have a communication with the poor culprit before the flogging commenced. He heard his story, — who he was, — how he had been brought into his present state. It appeared that he had been kidnapped from his parents when young, and had been thrown into every kind of temptation, and ruined by bad company. I shall never forget Villiers's face as he came upon the ground after the interview. It was pale as ashes. His lips were nearly bitten through. But he took his position, — gave the signal, — never shrunk, till after the tenth lash, when the poor fellow uttered a hideous cry, and Villiers dropped to the ground. He was taken up senseless ; and I never saw such agony as he evinced when he recovered. It was this which brought me to know the circumstances which had occurred to him before he joined the regiment. What made him feel most acutely the loss of his child was the sense that he himself had been undutiful to his own father."

Lady Eleanor sighed deeply.

"But I am distressing you," said O'Brien, "by these melancholy reminiscences. And here is the signal for breaking up our solemn festivities—for a more solemn dinner I never saw."

"Who is that distinguished-looking man?" asked the Duchess of San Lorenzo, as she reconnoitred with her glass the brilliant groups which began to

fill the ambassador's saloons on the breaking up of the dinner party.

"Do you mean," asked a lively conceited little abbé, who had attached himself to her side—"do you mean that tall mustachioed Russian bear, who is leaning against the pillar?"

"No,—the one on the other side by the window."

"Oh, that slim youth with the long flowing hair and the collar turned down to expose his Byron neck! That is the young English lord who writes the verses for the fashionable albums."

"How can you suppose I mean him?" pettishly replied the duchess. "Who would apply such an epithet as distinguished to him?"

"Is it the robust figure who is taking snuff out of a gold snuff-box, with a hand covered with gold rings, and brushing off the dust from his gold brocade waistcoat?"

"How can you ask such a question? Do you see Lady Eleanor Villiers?"

"If your Grace were not in the room," replied the little abbé, "I should say how can I possibly see any one else when she is here?"

"Well, look to the right of her,—not the young officer; that is Captain O'Brien; but the person in black—rather dark—without any thing very marked about him,—so simple and quiet, and yet with such an eye. See, the ambassador is coming up to him. He must be some one of consequence, for I never knew our punctilious host throw away such urbanity and condescension on ordinary mortals. See, Lord Claremont is introducing him. I declare the ambassador is shaking hands with him; and old General Fitzwilliam is moving towards him. Do find him out, and bring him to me."

And the little abbé fidgetted away to execute the

duchess's orders, full of the gratitude which he should excite in the interesting stranger, by introducing him to the great leader of the fashionable world of Florence, whose fiat, notwithstanding her frivolity and levity, stamped consequence on any one whom she condescended to notice. As he approached Lady Eleanor, Villiers and O'Brien were conversing with her, — O'Brien with his usual animation, and Villiers even cheerfully. He even laughed at some story which the young Irishman was relating; and Lady Eleanor looked pleased to see him shake off his gravity. The little abbé found no difficulty in insinuating himself into the group, requesting an introduction, and offering his assistance in exploring the classical scenes of Florence; all which courtesies Villiers received gently, but with a little distance of manner which might easily have been mistaken for hauteur. But the abbé could not be repelled. He proposed an introduction to the duchess; but Villiers bowed coldly, almost sternly; and expressing to Lady Eleanor his hope that he had sufficiently done his duty in paying his respects to the ambassador, he shook O'Brien by the hand, and retired, unobserved, from the gay throng.

CHAP. XX.

WHEN Villiers came to Florence, it was for a week only, in order to conclude some necessary business with Lord Claremont connected with the restoration of his property. But the week passed, and matters were still unsettled : the month came, and he was still there. It became necessary to fix the period of his return to England, and he found himself still postponing his departure ; each day becoming more loth to leave the place. Why ? he never thought of asking himself. But day slid into day unobservedly : at last some private business rendered it necessary for Lord Claremont and Lady Eleanor to go for a short time to Venice. Villiers, by Lady Eleanor's request to her father, was not asked to join them. It was proposed that he should remain at Florence till their return ; and the good Abbé St. Maur, the French Roman Catholic priest who resided in the family, proposed to remain with him. Villiers found, to his surprise, that he would gladly have accompanied his uncle to Venice ; he found also, to his no less surprise, that with the departure of his cousin the whole charm of Florence disappeared ; and that the house, which before was so full to him of animation and enjoyment that he could not bring himself to quit it, had become a dreary vacuity. He was not indeed without thoughts and occupations which filled his mind ; but even these had lost their absorbing interest, until, in one of the blank moments of chilliness which fall on us when a vacant chair reminds us of an absent being, a light flashed across him ; and the good Abbé ob-

served that, after a silent breakfast, Villiers walked for more than an hour up and down the same walk in the garden, his eye occasionally glancing up to a particular window, and his pace hurrying after each glance. The Abbé was an attentive observer ; but he never intruded upon confidence : and except that he looked into Villiers's face with more of kind and affectionate interest than usual, as Villiers brought him his stick and covered his silver hair with his hat, previous to their going out for their usual walk, there was nothing to betray what was passing in the mind of the benevolent and simple-minded ecclesiastic. Perhaps, however, something of this might be gathered from a letter which he sat up that night to write, and which we can insert at length, because, by our usual faculty of ubiquity, we were present at the post-office at Rome when a stout, sinister-looking person, no other than Mr. Pearce himself, came there to ask for letters for the Rev. Mr. O'Dogherty, then an inmate in the Jesuits' College ; and by the same faculty we followed Mr. Pearce into a small house, previous to his returning to the College, and by means of a process familiar to himself, were there able to read the letter with him before it was resealed and taken to its original destination. It ran thus : —

“ My dear O'Dogherty,

“ I received your last letter with some surprise, and reply to it with much pain. But, as a Christian minister, I cannot hesitate to speak what I feel. I never can take a part in any intrigue or plot, however desirable the object may seem. I do not think that plotting and intriguing can ever be serviceable to the Church of Christ, or to the cause of His truth. And, devotedly as I am attached to our holy Church, I have lamented most deeply that others have so

frequently endeavoured to assist and support it by what I must consider artifices unworthy of such an object. Surely we have suffered enough already for such conduct. I can well understand that the person of whom you speak should be an object of interest to all those who are concerned in restoring England to the unity of the faith. I have seen enough of him here to be assured that, wherever he is placed, he must exercise a powerful influence. His high-mindedness, his integrity, his firmness, his conscientious strictness, his ardent enthusiasm, and his command of property and rank, would render him a most important convert ; and I should rejoice, like yourself, to see him received into the bosom of our holy Church. More than this, it is my duty, at proper times, and in an open honest manner, to set before him the truth, and to lead him, as I may have opportunities, to embrace it. But this is very different from becoming a spy upon his actions, communicating his thoughts to others, or undertaking any secret manœuvres to accomplish such a desirable result. I deeply grieve that you should have known me so ill as to make to me such a proposition ; for however cautiously your letter is worded, I cannot read it in any other sense. And I will frankly declare, that no zeal for your order, or vow of obedience to your superiors, or prospect of benefit to the Church, can justify your engaging in such schemes. I must distrust, and deplore, and deprecate, any organisation, or religious association, which proceeds upon such principles. It is founded in falsehood and deceit, and must end in heresy and schism. You will call me a Protestant ; but my heart is Catholic as your own. I would even charge you to abstain from these intrigues, by the hope which I have that they are not required ; and that, if all things are left to the hand of Providence, He

will bring out the end which we all should desire. His mind is at this moment any thing but settled. He has been shocked in America by the full development of what is commonly called Protestantism. He abhors that licence of self-will and of private judgment which casts off all deference to authority, all belief in the testimony of the Church, and in the social principle by which the Church, as a body politic, exists. And he is too acute not to see that it must lead to every kind of dissension and heresy; and, with the banishment of truth, must banish order, and goodness, and religion from the world. All this he thoroughly understands, and requires no one to teach him. Much of it, I suspect, he derives from early impressions; much from his own generous nature: and he speaks often to me of an American bishop (so called), who appears to have exercised considerable influence over his mind, and to have taken pains to point out to him the working of these principles of mischief in that unhappy country. I have also reason to believe that he has friends in England, a Mr. Beattie in particular, whom he consults on these points, and who is very much tinctured with the new notions that are springing up in the English Church. I mention these things that, if your views with respect to him are simply to extricate him from error, your mind may be in some degree relieved. It would be idle, however, to disguise that he is at present a strict conformist to the English communion, and carries out its rules with far more scrupulousness than I have ever observed in any of his countrymen. He is, indeed, so conscientious, that I cannot imagine his becoming a member of any society, least of all of a religious society, without endeavouring fully to act up to its spirit and its rules. At the same time, I cannot but perceive that he has once entertained a

strong predilection for our holy Church ; and though some degree of repugnance to it succeeded in consequence of circumstances which occurred to him some years back, (circumstances, let me remind you, which had their origin in the artifices and intrigues then employed to win him over,) since he has been in Florence, and especially since he has seen the conduct of Lady E., I have reason to think that his feelings are very much mitigated. He often speaks to me of the possibility of such a reform in the Church as would restore the unity of Christendom. Unity appears to be his chief thought. He dreads the anarchical spirit which is rising up against the truth ; mourns over the impotency of secular governments to arrest the torrent of change ; longs to see once more the Church of his own country re-asserting her spiritual power, and gathering the people under her wing. And this, he thinks, cannot be achieved until its arm is strengthened, and its spirit renewed, by the restoration of peace and concord to the whole Church of Christ. So much I am at liberty to tell you without violating confidence. Nor, indeed, am I possessed of his confidence further than that he seems to take pleasure in conversing with me on such subjects. You hint at other things—at the influence which Lady E. may have upon his mind, and the probability of this winning him over, even if every thing else failed. Once more let me warn you not to engage in such speculations, or in any manœuvres to effect such an object. If such a union as you contemplate should be ordained by Providence, I can imagine few more likely to be blessed, as I have never seen persons apparently more suited to each other, more pure, more high-minded, more able to appreciate, and support, and improve each other's character, and to give a wonderful strength and support to the cause

of our Church in England. But let us leave such designs to Providence : let us leave to Him also to accomplish the great end we have in view—the conversion of England. I pray for it as you pray. But I cannot bring myself to view the Church of England as you do, or to confound it with that heterogeneous and fearful mass of heresy and dissent which has overrun that unhappy country. It has, indeed, severed itself from the see of Rome ; but so, also, our own Church in France has denied much that you, on your side of the Alps, consider essential to a right faith in this article. The English Church has preserved the creeds, the four first councils, her apostolic succession, (all this, strongly as you would deny it, I cannot, in common honesty, refuse to allow,) her respect for primitive antiquity, though individually it may have been neglected, the Holy Scriptures, and a sound principle of interpreting them by the aid of the teaching of the Church. I know how strongly you repudiate such concessions ; but as I differ from you in many other points, so I lament, and can only anticipate evil from a refusal to acknowledge in others palpable good. It is not honest ; it is not Christian. And sadly as the individual teachers and members of the English Church have neglected or misunderstood her teaching, sadly as her rulers may have failed to enforce her discipline and to uphold her authority, I can no more charge the sins of individuals upon the communion itself than I can reject our own Church, because, as we all confess, its rulers from time to time have so deeply sinned. If this spirit of concession and of charity prevailed among us — if our own Church would acknowledge that the English Church was a true branch of Christ's Catholic Body, and would seek to restore communion with it by correcting what is amiss in itself, and by abstaining

from troubling the peace of others, I cannot but believe that the English Church also would rejoice to see the wounds of Christendom healed, and would not hesitate to remove any thing in her own practice which might reasonably offend a sister or a mother church. But so long as we violently condemn what we are not called on to judge, and cut off from salvation those whom the early Church would not have excluded, and confound those who at most are erring in inferior matters with gross heretics and deliberate offenders against Christ's laws, and send out emissaries to trouble the peace of Christian communities, — so long, I must think, that we are sinning against God, and though a zealous and affectionate son of our Holy Church, I cannot expect that a blessing will be vouchsafed upon her labours. I know to what I should expose myself if these my opinions became generally known. But I am now old, and life has no longer any thing to tempt me. I have thought deeply and honestly on these things; and when I am called on, I shall not hesitate to declare my conviction. I pray, as you pray, for the restoration of England to the unity of the Church; but I pray also that we may discharge our duty in preparing for this great work by cutting off our own offences. England indeed is important, and you are right in directing towards her your chief thoughts. Her wealth, her intelligence, her weight in the councils of Europe, her science, her command of the seas, her vast empire, her commerce and her colonies, which would give Christianity access to every part of the world, her language, which is spread over the whole continent, her gigantic resources of every kind, her very position on the globe, point her out as the strong arm of Christ's Church — as the great sanctuary of Christ's truth. With England doing its duty for the cause of the Gospel, what triumphs might we not expect for

that Gospel even to the end of the world? In all this we heartily agree. But beware lest your zeal for Rome make you the preacher of another gospel than that which Christ and his Apostles preached. Seek not to make England a handmaid of the Pope rather than a handmaid of Christ. Think not of a spiritual empire over the minds and bodies of men, but of proclaiming to them truth, and truth only. And then you will not be tempted to engage in those plots and conspiracies (I cannot call them by a milder name) in which none take refuge but those who have objects at heart which they cannot trust to God's providence to accomplish, or who have not faith in his power. You know that I have always remonstrated against any such means of effecting Christian objects. They have brought upon us already hatred, shame, persecution, contempt, and punishment — punishment most deserved, though most severe. They have arrayed against us not only kings and princes, but people and priests. They have made the very name that you bear a by-word for falsehood and cunning. And the principle on which they were adopted at the first has led to other acts and other doctrines, which have roused even bishops and fathers of our Church to protest against your system as against the Antichrist, which is to come. Forgive me this freedom. But as an old and beloved friend — as one with whom I have borne much, and whom I cannot believe to be yet entangled irremediably in the meshes of a most dangerous policy, — I warn you, and pray for you, that you may yet be preserved in the simplicity and innocency of Christian charity. My letter of course you will destroy. And my secret, so far as my opinions may be a secret, is, I know, safe in your hands.

“From your affectionate brother in the Lord,
“PIERRE ST. MAUR.”

The effect of this letter upon the person to whom it was addressed, it is unnecessary at present to explain. One thing also may be observed, that it was not destroyed. The admissions in it were too important to permit their being lost. And the simple unsuspecting St. Maur little thought, that in making such a communication to a bosom friend he was betraying himself to a whole community. In the meanwhile the absence of Lord Claremont and Lady Eleanor threw him every day more into the company and confidence of Villiers, whose respect for his office, for his age, for his singular simplicity and piety, and for the absence of all bigotry and bitterness from the strictness of his religious opinions, was increased as he became more acquainted with the trials through which he had passed. By degrees each opened his mind more freely to the other. And St. Maur felt no scruple in suggesting to Villiers all the considerations which rendered the union of the Church under the Roman Pontiff an object of such paramount interest and importance. He pointed out the impotency of any national church to resist the aggressions of the civil power. He showed the necessity of its allying itself with that civil power, if left without any other arm to strengthen its authority. He recounted the temptations of Erastianism, and the corruptions and laxity of discipline which such secularity involved. He dwelt much on the same grand view of Christian unity which Macarthy had before with picturesque effect, and all the eloquence of enthusiasm exhibited to Villiers at Rome. He asked how doubts could be resolved without some one authoritative expositor of divine truth—how dissensions and schisms could be prevented where doubts were permitted—how the picture of the Church, as delineated in the Jewish polity, could

be developed except by establishing within it some visible centre of unity, with one Great High Priest and one glorious Temple. All the ordinary processes by which the Scriptures have been pressed into the service of Romish controversialists were familiar to him; and he adopted them with a simplicity of faith and sincerity of conviction which gave, at times, even to vague inferences and metaphorical analogies, the force of argument. Villiers listened. And when he brought forward the result of his own inquiries on primitive antiquity, and with a noble indignation protested against the forgeries and falsehoods by which the papal supremacy had been maintained on this ground, the honest, unreserved St. Maur threw him off his guard at once, by conceding the point, by allowing the doctrine to be a mere modern development, but a development of expediency.

“Development!” repeated Villiers to himself; “Development!” and he dropped the abbé’s arm as they were walking in the gardens of the Palais Pitti; and while the old man rested himself against a vase, Villiers was thoughtfully pacing the terrace before the grand fountain, which shot up a column of water high into the air, and then spread it out and developed it in a fan-like canopy and dome of silver.

CHAP. XXI.

“DEVELOPMENT!” again repeated Villiers, “Development!” as he stood the next morning watching a young orange-tree which was shooting out its tender leaves from a newly-planted stem, when a servant came to announce to him that a gentleman, with letters of introduction from England, was in the saloon. Villiers’s thoughts were still upon the subject of development, when he found himself facing a young man with an easy rather than a gentlemanly address, and a disagreeable sneer upon a cold sceptical countenance, which made Villiers, who was sensitively alive to such physiognomies, throw into his manner all the coldness and reserve which was consistent with his usual politeness. The gentleman had brought an introduction to Lord Claremont from an under secretary of state, with whom he had become acquainted by writing a political pamphlet in defence of the Irish education system. And he introduced himself by a name which Villiers had never heard before, but with which our readers are already acquainted, Mr. Marmaduke Brook.

Mr. Marmaduke Brook was what is commonly called a man of the world. He had raised himself from a comparatively obscure rank to a certain position by the address with which, both at school and at college, and in after-life, he had insinuated himself into the acquaintance of persons of rank, and attached himself to them. As is usually the case, his liberal and democratical theories were per-

fectly compatible with a profound and fulsome reverence for rank in itself, and a great degree of soreness and discontent at the reflection that he did not possess it. But, clever and acute as he was, he soon learned that intimacy and influence with the fashionable and aristocratic world, which constituted the great object of his earthly ambition, was not to be attained by mere servility. He affected, therefore, considerable independence; never condescended to flattery, except where he saw that this was the only bait which he could offer; and assumed a tone of equality, and even of superiority, which threw ordinary companions off their guard, and in which, however surprised at first, they soon learned to acquiesce. The same policy he proposed to follow with Villiers; but for once in his life he found himself completely baffled by the simplicity, but coldness, of Villiers's manners. His talent, however, and a certain power of accommodating himself to the tastes and habits of any society, enabled him by degrees to force himself even upon Villiers, whose acquaintance he soon found it was important for him to obtain. And notwithstanding the repugnance, amounting to antipathy, with which Villiers regarded his selfish and worldly character, and his avowed principles of liberalism, both in religion and in politics, it frequently happened that Mr. Brook was permitted to intrude his company upon the abbé and himself after the introduction of the first day had been attained.

It was on one of these occasions that the abbé and Villiers were standing in the gallery of Florence, watching a young artist who was copying, on a large scale, the celebrated "St. John." The ardent intelligent features of the boy—for he was scarcely more—had struck Villiers; and he had been led, as he usually was led by such a spectacle, to inquire into

his history, with something more than common curiosity, as if some secret hope, which nevertheless he knew to be vain, was still to be fulfilled by the inquiry—as if he were about to find something which he had long lost. But the boy's story was still unfinished, when the abbé came up and stood with him, watching the young painter's progress.

"And you are copying this picture at large," said Villiers, "for an altar-piece?"

"Yes, sir."

"And it is to be four times the size of the original?"

The young artist assented.

Villiers paused a little. "Suppose," he continued, taking the abbé's arm—"suppose that in effecting this enlarged copy—this development, you were to insert a feature, or a colour, or a portraiture of your own, what would your employer say to you?"

"I suppose, sir, he would not buy my picture."

"And suppose," added Villiers, "that in copying the face you left the eyes of the same size as the original, while you made the nose of the magnified proportion, what would you produce?"

The boy laughed, and answered that it would be a monster.

"You would not call it," said Villiers, "a development, but a destruction of the original?"

"Certainly not."

"So that there are two laws," said Villiers, "which you observe in your process of development,—first, to insert nothing of your own; and secondly, to develop the whole together, not omitting any part?"

The abbé smiled, for he knew what was passing in Villiers's mind.

"And will not these laws," Villiers continued, turning to the abbé,— "will not these laws apply to

the office of the Church in developing the doctrine and the discipline of the Gospel? Must she not beware of introducing anything of her own in the pure simple word of Revelation? And when she does expand and illustrate its general doctrines, must she not take care to embrace them all, to omit none, to bestow equal attention, and develope in equal proportions all alike, lest she make not a copy, but a monster?"

The abbé assented.

"How far your Church," continued Villiers, "has observed the first rule, might be a separate question. But consider only the second. You say that in the fourth and later centuries the doctrine of the unity of the Church was developed into the papal supremacy. Were there not other doctrines which should have been developed also, and which you have suffered to remain in less than their original proportion—the doctrine of the authority of the whole college of the Apostles, of their Apostolical privileges separately, of the Episcopal power, of the independence of the civil state, of the authority of Scripture? Were not these essentially parts of the system of primitive Christianity; and have you not so neglected these, while you expounded the doctrine of the visible unity of the Church, that they have been overlaid, as it were, and suppressed under the partial exaggeration of a single counterbalancing feature?"

Before the abbé could satisfy himself with an answer, Mr. Brook, who had seen and joined the little group, ventured, in defiance of Villiers's very cold recognition, to take a part in the conversation. "You are speaking, I find, of the new doctrine, which is causing such a sensation in England. It is singular to see how you high churchmen are coming round by degrees to the truth."

Villiers opened his eyes widely, and looked at him.

“Mr. Brook must excuse me for begging that he will not apply to me any title but that of churchman. I know nothing either of high or low ; and it is the use of such party words which has already done incalculable injury to the cause of truth and peace.”

Brook quailed under the eye of Villiers, but soon recovered himself. “And yet you must allow,” he said, “that there are parties in the Church, and that those who have adopted what are called High Church views are also putting forward their doctrine of development.”

“We must allow,” said Villiers, “that a few individuals who have hitherto maintained principles in accordance with the great body of the Church are now running into extravagances, and endeavouring to propagate error. But we must be very cautious whom we confound with them.”

“I confess,” continued Mr. Brook, “that I am rejoiced to see any approach at last to liberality and freedom of view. Why is religion, any more than any other art or science, to be excluded from those improvements and expansions, which the progress of knowledge and civilization must produce ? We know how experience increases knowledge, how prejudices are removed, and errors corrected, by the advance of time. You speak of antiquity ; but we, as Bacon truly says, are the real ancients. Surely there is no reason why dogmas of theology may not be amended and corrected as well as theories of any other philosophy ?”

“But one reason,” said the abbé, gravely, — “that religion, the Christian religion, is a revelation, and that philosophical theories are discoveries : one comes from God, the other from man ; one is given to us perfect at once, the other is imperfect, and perfected only by degrees.”

"Ah!" said Brook; "but then you take for granted the fact that your theological dogmas—for instance, your Athanasian Creed—are revelations."

Villiers coloured indignantly.

"Mr. Brook will feel," he said, "that, in speaking to a clergyman, and even to a lay member of the Church, who heartily believes what he promised to believe at his baptism, it is at least becoming to speak with respect of the faith which they profess. Whether there are not higher motives for reverence, whether the bare possibility of such doctrines having come from Heaven may not be sufficient to alarm us against treating them with sneers and sarcasm, I will leave it Mr. Brook's own good taste to judge."

Brook had not been accustomed to hear levity on such subjects rebuked, and he was rather surprised. But his courage was not daunted.

"I can assure you," he replied, "that I had no intention of giving offence; far from it. But may I venture to ask the abbé how he proves the fact of the revelation of this or that doctrine?"

"Assuredly," said the abbé; "by the testimony of the Church."

"Testimony to what; my dear abbé?" asked Villiers.

"To the particular doctrine," replied the abbé, "which is called in question—testimony that it has been handed down from the Apostles; and their supernatural commission, of course, is attested by their miracles."

"That it has been handed down!" asked Villiers. "Then this would imply that it has been transmitted unchanged. You must identify it, must you not, throughout?"

"Certainly," said the abbé.

"And is it easy," asked Villiers, "to identify it without preserving it unchanged? If a messenger

comes to me from a friend with a letter, stating that he is to bring me a young infant, and, when I ask for the infant, he produces me a full-grown man"——

"You mean the development of the infant," interrupted Brook, laughing. But there was something in the illustration which had suggested itself that seemed to have pained Villiers, and he was silent. The abbé was evidently perplexed, but recovered himself.

"Surely," he said, "if you were in India, or some still more remote country, and a considerable time had elapsed between the writing of the letter and the arrival of the messenger, you would not be surprised to find that the child had grown? You would not doubt its identity because it was no longer a mere infant?"

"No," said Villiers; "because in the child itself there is a principle of growth; and its alteration is so necessary that it must be implied in the original message."

"And is it not so," asked the abbé, "with divine truth? Has not that also within it a principle of growth? Was not the seed sown by our Lord upon earth, and left by Him expressly to be developed, after his Ascension, by the Holy Spirit in the mind of His Church?"

"Of His Apostles, assuredly," said Villiers. "But the question at issue is, whether any, since the Apostles, have been entrusted with the same power of developing it?"

"What do you understand by development?" asked the abbé. "What is precisely the process of it? and then, perhaps, we may obtain more insight into the truth."

"I mean by development," said Villiers, "the application of a general rule, or a general principle, to the particular cases which fall under it. Thus

the Fourth Commandment, and indeed all the other Commandments, are given to us in the form of specific enactments, which virtually, and by natural implication, contain in them, like the Trojan horse, a whole host of legitimate inferences and precepts of conduct. The duty of observing the Sabbath involves the duty of obeying all other positive commands of God; and the duty of obeying positive commands in general applies to every instance which occurs of the kind. So the doctrine of the divinity of our Blessed Lord involves a multitude of other doctrines;—as, that he is most humbly to be adored; his atonement—that he is to be blessed and loved by us; his humanity—that he is to receive from us all such regards and expressions of affection as are due to a perfect human being, partaker of the same nature with ourselves. So, also, when two or more doctrines are put together, from these new relations and combinations will flow out new deductions and conclusions, just as all the theorems in Euclid are drawn out of the first axioms, problems, and definitions, by means of arranging them in various groups and forms; just as chemical elements produce an infinite diversity of effects, according as they are thrown into different mixtures and proportions. Saltpetre and charcoal, separately, are harmless: combined, they explode in fire.”

“You are right,” said the abbé. “And is not the whole process of Christian instruction, and of Christian obedience, such a process of development? Has Almighty God given to us any more than the first general principles of conduct to guide our moral life, and the first general truths of the Divine nature to embrace in our intellect, leaving it to our conscience and our understanding to draw them out and apply them to our practice?”

Villiers assented.

"You teach a child his creed," continued the abbé. "Is he to learn nothing more? You impress on him the Ten Commandments. Will they alone suffice without some process of development?"

Villiers shook his head.

"Where, then, do you condemn us," asked the abbé, "if we think, that in the polity of the Church, as in many portions of its teaching, something, nay much, may have been left, at the first preaching of the Gospel, to be expounded and drawn out in succeeding generations?"

"Precisely so, precisely!" interrupted Mr. Brook. "I am delighted to hear you. This is precisely what we contend for. You think with us, that there is no necessity to adhere blindly and bigotedly to old formularies of dogmatic teaching—that new light may from time to time stream in upon the truth,—that we, in fact, in the nineteenth century may be much more capable, after longer experience, and with our increased civilization, of distinguishing between truth and error than our ancestors 1800 years since. This is the very principle which our great dissenting divines, and, indeed, all our best modern philosophers, are anxious to establish, and which what are called the orthodox churchmen are so peremptory in condemning."

The abbé seemed startled at such zealous approbation and support from a person whose principles were fully as obnoxious to himself as they were to Villiers. "You forget," he said to Mr. Brook, "one very essential difference; it may be necessary that doctrines should be developed. But it is not the same whether they are developed by an individual, or by the Church. You would leave them to the tender mercies of private judgment; each man thinking and inferring, and applying for

himself. With us, this privilege is reserved to a proper ecclesiastical authority."

"You object, then," said Mr. Brook, "to our theory, because it places the determination of truth in the hands of an individual?"

"Certainly," said the abbé.

"Because," continued Brook, "you think an individual is not competent to decide, and that he requires correction, assistance, external rule?"

"Certainly."

"And in whom, in the view of a great portion of your Church, does this power reside? Is it not in the Pope?"

"Certainly," said the abbé; "such is the doctrine of many."

"And in the Pope, as an individual independent of councils?"

"Not with us," said the abbé; "not with the Gallican Church, but with Jesuits and ultramon-
tanes."

"And you repudiate their view?" asked Villiers.

"Assuredly."

"And why?"

"Because I can find no promise made to justify such an infallibility."

"Have you not," asked Villiers, "promises as distinct, and language as decisive, in the opinion of many, as you have for the papal supremacy generally?"

"We adhere," said the abbé, "to the practice and principles of many past generations, in the Church, in conceding to the Pope great power and authority, though it may be difficult to limit it precisely."

"But you profess," continued Villiers, "to regard the whole body of the Church assembled in her councils, as the authorised expositor and developer

of divine truth—not the individual Pope. The Pope is, with you, only an important member—a voice in the Church?”

“Certainly.”

“And you condemn and excommunicate us,” continued Villiers, “not because we reject the authority of the Pope, but because we reject the authority of what you conceive to be general councils, and therefore, legitimate representatives of the whole church?”

The abbé was unwilling to make the concession, but could not refuse. He made some observations respecting the importance of recognising the papal authority as an element in the tribunal of the Church, but was compelled to acknowledge that it was difficult, or almost impossible, to define accurately its extent, or to say when disobedience became a crime.

“And yet,” concluded Villiers, “you do not hesitate to excommunicate us, and to cut us off from salvation, because, in our own judgment of the doctrines and practice of the Primitive Catholic Church, and according to the practice of our own immediate ancestors, we have not allowed to the Pope such an extent of prerogative, in a matter, by your own confession, never accurately defined, as he himself would claim. You have done the same, have you not? You do not, in the Gallican Church, allow to him what is claimed by him in Italy. What right have you to modify or circumscribe his prerogatives, which we have not in England? And if we have committed a deadly sin, are you not guilty likewise? And yet you join in excommunicating us. Is this Christian?”

“We are justified,” said the abbé, “by the general voice of the church, which you have rejected.”

“I know not,” said Villiers, “where you will

find such rejection. It has been our professed and recorded desire to adhere to the general voice of the Church. But the voice which we recognise is that of the old Church of the Apostles, and of the first centuries, not that of modern days. And it was not because the Council of Trent developed Christian truth, but because it altered and corrupted it, that we discard its decrees."

"You agree, then," said the abbé, "that Christian truth must be developed, and developed by the Church?"

"Assuredly."

"We have driven away Mr. Brook," remarked the abbé, as that personage retired to join another group at the other end of the gallery. "Tell me now, for we can speak more at ease, what are your real objections to our theory of development."

"First," replied Villiers, "as I before said, that, in professing to develope, you change and alter. Secondly, that you claim for those to whom you assign the task of development an authority and weight as a representative of the whole Church, when in reality they form but a part of it. Thirdly, that not content with requiring to their teaching such amount of moral respect as is fairly proportioned to the goodness and wisdom of human teachers, you impose their dogmas as infallible decrees, and made the reception of them essential to salvation. Fourthly, that in so doing you transgress the express commands and warnings of the early Church, which drew a broad and distinct division between that portion of the Christian faith which was to be imposed on and received by all as essential to salvation, and that which, however true in itself, or correctly deduced from fundamental credenda, was not itself established as fundamental by God. Fifthly, that you transgress by the same act not

only the commands of God, but the whole analogy of the Church. When we would rear an oak, we know that we must plant an acorn; and that acorn is itself the oak in a certain stage of development. But if we buried a young tree as we bury the acorn, would it live? And when we would rear up in the mind of man the full expansion of Christian truth, we must plant in it first the general principles, the filaments of all truth, organised and concentrated as in a seed or germ; for instance, as we find them in the Creed; but not expanded in a more developed system. In this manner we do not load the mind with more than it can bear; we do not exact from it more implicit faith than is necessary;—above all, we do not require its assent to the correctness of the logical faculty in man as exercised upon divine truth, in which attempt it must, by its nature, be liable to err, and has no guarantee against error from a divine promise. We require truth only in historical testimony—that such and such doctrines have been received from God.* We leave the logical faculty scope to exercise itself subsequently, and the various ramifications and details of doctrine to shoot out and grow, according as they are required, under the care of a teacher and the labours of the pupil conjointly. But you, my dear abbé,” continued Villiers, as he hastened to close the conversation on observing the return of Mr. Brook—“you, that is, your Church, would plant in every mind at once the full-grown tree; and if the mind is incapable of receiving it, if it hesitates to place as much confidence in the reasoning of man as in the word of God, you cut it off from salvation. And thus you compel the mind either to an unlimited credulity, or an unlimited scepticism. And Romanists, in proportion as they enter zealously and heartily into the spirit of their system, and are

not saved from it by some happy inconsistency, which perpetually embroils and perplexes them as in the Gallican Church, must become either infidels or fanatics."

"And yet," said the abbé, "if authority has been given to the Church thus to develop, and thus to impose its development on its members——"

"If!" replied Villiers. "But in that *if*, how much is included. You cannot show me any such authority in the Scriptures conceded, to say the least, to any but the whole Church as the full representative of the Apostolical body; and your Church is but a part. The Romish see, and those who have acceded to it, form but a portion of the Christian body, are representatives but of one Apostle. You cannot produce any such practice from the Primitive Church! for I deny that the Nicene Creed was a development—it was a statement. It was no more a development of doctrine than Magna Charta in its own language was a development of the English constitution. It was a declaratory law—declaratory of facts and doctrines already in existence. And the reasonings of the Council of Nice did not tend to draw out new positions from the Scriptures, but to justify old. And if by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they were authorised to decide at all on such an essential point as the amount of credence requisite for salvation, they were authorised also to decide that that amount should not be exceeded. With the anathemas—the most solemn anathemas—of the Church which you profess to follow protesting against you, how can you appeal to it? Did not the half of Christendom separate from you on this very ground, that you tampered with the creeds? Either you are condemned by the voice of the ancient Church, or, in despising its condemnation, you own yourself to be a new

Church ; and with a new Church comes a new doctrine ; and with a new doctrine where remains the faith once ‘for all delivered to the saints ?’ ‘the traditions which we are bound to hold fast ?’ ‘the Gospel, one and unchanged, which cannot be preached other than as it was preached by the Apostle, though preached by an angel from Heaven.’ It is because your doctrine of development destroys the very fact of revelation—that it overthrows the very foundations of truth and faith, that therefore it is so fearful. And yet upon it your doctrine of the supremacy is founded, and all your departures from the faith and practice of the primitive Christianity—departures, as they appear to us—are attempted to be justified. Your worship of saints, your adoration of images, your terrors of purgatory, the licentiousness of your indulgences, the frightful blasphemy of your language to the blessed Virgin—every thing which compelled the Reformation, and with the Reformation brought on the frightful excesses to which sectarianism and infidelity have proceeded in these later times.”

“ You are still discussing, I find,” said Mr. Brook, as he resumed his position by the side of Villiers with a mixture of freedom and servility. “ I must take my stand with the abbé. We find in England that there are no greater friends to liberty of conscience and general toleration than the Catholics.”

“ Roman Catholics, I must beg to call them,” said Villiers ; “ unless, indeed, such a name implies a self-contradiction.”

“ Oh !” replied Brook, “ I have no objection to any name. What is there in a name ? Words are but signs : and one of the strange absurdities of the present day is the contest for names.”

“ You do not think it an absurdity, do you ?” said Villiers, turning to the abbé. “ You would

not allow me to call you any thing but a Catholic, without remonstrance, I am sure?"

"Certainly not," said the abbé; "for Catholic is the title of the Church given to it in the Creed; and if I am not Catholic, I am not a member of it."

"And if not a member of the Church," continued Villiers, "you are not, we shall both allow, an heir of salvation? At least, you have no promise or assurance of it?"

"Assuredly," said the abbé; while Mr. Brook listened with a sarcastic expression of contempt.

"You are one, then," said he, "of the new Oxford school—the P——"

"Sir," interrupted Villiers, "I am afraid you are proceeding to apply to me an expression which I never permit to be used to me. For the same reason that I objected to your use of the word Catholic, I must protest against any one applying to me another word which, besides that it calumniates a good man as being the leader of a party in the Church, condemns all who accept it as being followers of an individual teacher, instead of being followers of Him whom only we may recognise as our Master. It is virtually to unchristianize them; at the least it represents them as schismatics. You will oblige me by never employing it when you are choosing to describe any religious opinions which you may suppose me to hold. I beg to wish you good morning."

"You have been rather severe on Mr. Brook," said the abbé, as he took Villiers's arm to assist himself down the stairs.

"I did not mean to be severe," said Villiers; "I have no right to be severe on any one. There is too much here" (and he put his hand to his heart) "to humble and shame me, for me to undertake the office of a censor. And yet I am naturally hasty; and they used to call me haughty. But it

certainly is a trial to me to meet such men ; and the present day abounds with them. I can bear enthusiasm of any kind, for it must contain good, and only requires to be rightly tempered and directed ; but the cold, sneering, unfeeling, flippant sophistry which has crept into the spirit of the day, and which men call liberalism, is—— However, we gain nothing by speaking of it.”

“ I fear you have offended him ? ” said the abbé.

“ It is very possible,” answered Villiers ; “ but I must risk his offence rather than permit him to indulge in that tendency to give nicknames, which has done more harm to the Church, by forcing men into parties almost in despite of themselves, even than heresy itself. It is the fomentor of all schism.”

“ But I thought,” said the abbé, “ that you and all other Protestants cared little for schism. Surely your Church is overrun with it ; and what have you done to prevent it ? ”

“ My dear abbé,” said Villiers, “ why will you, an educated, well-informed, and conscientious Christian, suffer yourself to think and feel of the English Church as the Romish communion, whether in ignorance or design, teaches the most violent of her members to speak ; misunderstanding or misrepresenting our principles, and confounding us with those sectarians who have gone out from among us, but are not of us ? We, by the voice of our Church, are as deeply interested in the cause of unity—are as solemnly pledged to maintain it—as you are. If we differ in the mode of preserving it—if we think that the creation of a visible centre of unity in the person of one supreme bishop is neither consonant to the divine form of Church polity, nor conducive to the end desired—if we would rather adhere to the old apostolical system

of the first centuries, than adopt your new developed theories—and if, owing to your violent attacks upon us and to our own weakness and individual faults, we have been unable to retain within our fold a large number of our sheep, as you yourselves have been unable to retain the branches of the reformed communions—this is no proof that we repudiate or despise unity, but that we have been unwilling to preserve it by a wrong principle, and unable to preserve it by the right.”

“And you will not, then, accede,” said the abbé, “to the theory of development?”

“I think it,” said Villiers, “the most insidious, the most fatal, the most fertile in mischief of all those rationalistic principles on which Romanism has built up its system. Grant this doctrine, and you grant a power to subvert the faith, to destroy truth, to erect a spiritual despotism of superstition and tyranny, which must end in a spiritual anarchy. You grant, I think, the very principle for which all heretics, and schismatics, and infidels, are clamouring; and upon it must be charged those odious excesses and crimes which have disfigured the Christian Church since the Romish supremacy was established, both in those who have upheld and in those who have resisted it.”

“And yet,” said the abbé, “you allow the necessity of some development?”

“Assuredly,” said Villiers, as they reached the house, and stopped under the gateway. “Assuredly. If I were to sum up my own view of it, it would be that development itself is an operation contemplated by God himself” (and Villiers removed his hat as he mentioned the holy name) “in his whole scheme of Christian instruction. But development confined properly to the Church, limited by laws which will prevent it from either

adding, or taking away, or altering, from becoming, in fact, any thing but development—when carried on by individuals, subject to the watchful control of the Church ; and when enunciated by the Church, to be enunciated without any such sanction or enforcement as would alter the terms of communion prescribed by the Apostles, or narrow the gates of Heaven, or enlarge the articles of the Christian faith, which by them were selected as fundamental, and enforced as essential to salvation. The Epistles are in this way a development of those forms of doctrine which were taught to candidates for baptism before the Scriptures were completed. They were written by Apostles, of whose inspiration there is no doubt. And yet even they were not enforced upon Christians as terms of salvation. The catechumen was pledged to the Creed, not to the Scriptures. And can a privilege not claimed by Apostles be claimed by a single bishop, or by any of their successors ? Let the Romish church develope her system of belief as we have developed ours in our Articles. Let her, if she chooses, impose her development upon her own clergy and teachers. She may reason rightly or wrongly, and be responsible before the Almighty for her error. But she will not be guilty of the sin with which she is now charged, of fixing arbitrary conditions of salvation for which she has no sanction but her own voice, and so cutting herself off from Christendom by cutting Christendom off from herself. Remove your excommunication, and you restore peace and unity to the Church.”

The abbé sighed deeply. “ I fear,” he said, “ that these are dreams which can never be realised.”

“ Let us pray,” said Villiers, “ that they may be realised — realised without compromise of truth. And to earnest prayer who can deny that even this

great boon may be granted by Him who is the 'Author of peace and lover of concord?' But how, I often wonder, how can you offer to him your prayers for such a blessing, when your acts are the daily cause of discord and confusion?"

"In what way?" asked the abbé.

"In this way," answered Villiers. "You begin with forming an unauthorised theory of church unity. To justify this you are obliged to recur to your theory of development: to sanction that, you must claim infallibility; and infallibility being presumed, you cannot escape from intolerance: and thus you place yourselves in hostility to all around you who are not of you; and you introduce enmity, and with enmity persecution, wherever your faith prevails. For, be assured, it is not possible for Christians to be deeply and sincerely religious, and yet to live in love and charity—perfect love and undisturbed charity—with those whom they believe to be in the wilful commission of deadly sin, and abandoning their own salvation. How can subjects exercise a true loyalty to a monarch whom they regard as a heretic, and therefore, perhaps, as worse than an infidel? How can provinces live together happily and affectionately, as parts of one and the same empire, when they are distracted by the claims of a foreign allegiance, involving the peril of their souls? How can parents and children, wives and husbands——" But here Villiers stopped. A memory of the past came to his mind, and a thought for the future; and, hastily closing the conversation, he returned to his room.

CHAP. XXII.

It often happens that an accidental conversation does more than weeks of reflection to bring out, and arrange, and fix principles which shape our conduct through life. And so it was with Villiers. General, vague, and desultory opinions, strong, indeed, and permanent, but not consecutively combined, on the subject of Romanism, had possessed him for several years. The subject had occupied his attention, painfully and anxiously, of late. It had mixed itself with many floating day-dreams. He felt that it was intimately connected with his future plans and welfare. But he was remarkable for seizing on the clue of an argument, and following it out rapidly, and tracing the connection between its several stages. And his discussion with the abbé had led him to a somewhat connected view of different features in the system of Romanism, which, separately, he had always regarded with great aversion. The doctrine of development had presented itself to him as a speculative question. But excommunication, intolerance, the bitterness of sorrow, if not of hatred, which the Romish theory fosters in its children towards all who differ from them, and the consequent impossibility of forming any social union where Romanism is an element amidst contending systems—this now pressed upon him with tenfold force. The remainder of the day after the conversation with the abbé he passed in his own room. It was over the apartments occupied by the abbé,

whose own mind was anxiously engaged in watching every turn of the young Englishman's opinions and feelings ; and who knew not whether to augur well or ill for the object nearest to his heart, as he heard Villiers pacing backwards and forwards with an agitated step ; now stopping, as if to think ; now throwing open his window, as if to calm the turbulence of his feelings by gazing out on the bright sky, and cypress terraces of the garden of the palazzo. More than once the abbé caught the sound of a suppressed groan, as he threw himself on his knees and remained in prayer — praying that he might be enlightened in the truth ; praying as fervently that he might be guided now in the path of duty, and be enabled to withstand the strong temptation to which he felt that he was exposed every day that he remained in a spot where Lady Eleanor was present. He sent his apologies to the abbé for not joining him at dinner ; and when the abbé ventured to seek him in his own room in the evening, he met Villiers's servant carrying the letters just arrived from the post, and preparing his master's travelling apparatus.

“ Are you leaving us at once, so soon ? ” exclaimed the abbé ; “ packing up ! ”

But Villiers did not hear him. He was hastily opening a letter in Lady Eleanor's handwriting. He read it ; and turning to the abbé, said, “ I was going away to-morrow morning ; I have lingered here too long, and ought to be in England. But this letter must detain me. My uncle is ill. They are bringing him here at once, and expect to arrive to-morrow. Of course I cannot leave him. But,” he continued, with a deep sigh, “ I must remain here no longer than is absolutely necessary.”

The abbé understood him, and did not press for any explanation.

When Lord Claremont's travelling-carriage drove into the court-yard the next day, Villiers was on the steps to receive him. He assisted Lady Eleanor out with outward calmness; only she observed that his hand shook as it took hers, and was withdrawn in a moment. And her own mind was as much alive as his to every little sign which might indicate what passed within. Lord Claremont was assisted to his room. His medical attendants were soon with him. But when Villiers waited to see them after their consultation, he was shocked to hear that the illness was of a more serious nature than had been apprehended, and might probably terminate in paralysis. He was to be watched carefully. The uncle had done little to win the affections or command the gratitude of the nephew. He was a cold, dull, formal, uncharactered man, who seemed incapable of being touched by any thing but the claims of the Whig party to his vote in parliament, and the influence of his daughter, to whom he occasionally showed signs of attachment far beyond what could be expected from his selfish, phlegmatic nature. But Villiers had been taught a lesson. He spent the night on a sofa in his uncle's room, without permitting any one but the servants to know it. And he was comforting himself while dressing the next morning in his own dressing-room with the fallacious hope that the patient was better; when he was alarmed by the hasty ringing of bells, and the hurry of footsteps along the passages. Before he could ring to inquire, his own man knocked hastily at the door, and entreated him to make haste—Lord Claremont was in a fit—was dying. Villiers was in a moment by his bed-side. The poor old man lay insensible, and one side of his face was distorted by a seizure of paralysis. Lady Eleanor, her hands clasped round him, was chafing his temples,

and though evidently in fearful agony of mind, did not permit it to render her incapable of giving the requisite orders. Villiers took his place at her side, assisting her in all that she did, or hastening the arrival of the physicians. Half an hour elapsed before they came. Lord Claremont showed no signs of recovery, and Lady Eleanor's firmness was evidently giving way. She neither wept nor spoke, except to ask for something seemingly required by the patient. But Villiers saw, by the working of her lips, that the suppression of feeling could not last much longer. The physicians came, and at their request he led her from the room.

This is not a love-story; and we have no wish to involve our readers in the details of love-scenes. Both Villiers and Lady Eleanor possessed strong minds—strong both in the energy of their emotions, and in the control which they exercised over them.

But the strength must have been superhuman which could have preserved the secret of their hearts wholly unrevealed from each other at such a moment. Every word of encouragement and consolation on the part of Villiers, however anxiously guarded by him, conveyed volumes to Lady Eleanor's mind. And even the violence which she put herself on her own feelings, and the embarrassment with which she listened to him, and the tremulousness of her voice when she begged him to return to her father's room and obtain a report from the physicians, was sufficient to assure Villiers that happiness was within his reach; that he needed only to ask for it and obtain it; but—and with the *but*, instead of joy, there came intense misery. He had made no declaration. She had uttered nothing like confession. But both knew what the other felt; and both knew also that there was a

gulf between them which neither could pass. The first thought of each upon separating was a fear lest a betrayal had taken place—a betrayal which, unaccompanied by any farther declaration, might compromise the happiness of the other. The second was a resolution to make the explanation instantly, if it could be done. The good abbé was at hand; and he was the first person to whom, as to her confessor, Lady Eleanor committed the secret of her affections, entreating him to take some opportunity without delay of assuring Villiers of her unalterable resolution never to engage in marriage with one whose religion was different from her own. The abbé lost no time. The next day Lord Claremont was better, and the abbé insisted on Villiers leaving the sick room, and coming out for fresh air.

Villiers—distracted, absent, almost vacillating, and recovering from his vacillation only to be filled with remorse at his weakness—suffered the good old man to take his arm. They strolled into the great square; and the abbé led him up into the gallery, as to the place most likely to occupy and amuse him. He brought him into the tribune, and soon commenced a conversation with the young boy whom Villiers had seen there on his last visit, and who had excited his interest by his skill in copying the “St. John.” The abbé led him on to tell his story. Villiers became gradually interested in it. It was a tale not unlike that of his own parents, though in humbler circumstances. There had been a marriage between a Romanist and a Protestant—then had followed the usual estrangement of affection, which ended in bitterness and persecution, as soon as religion, which at first was a mere name both with the husband and the wife, became a passion and a duty. There had been the same separation of children—the son following

the faith of the father, the daughter that of the mother. Then came the sickness of the Protestant father, his death-bed, and the poor boy's account of his mother's agony of mind; and the torture and persecution to which his father was exposed by her relatives, even in his last moments, to induce him to change his faith, did more than any arguments could have done to steel Villiers in his resolution. The father died; the child had received his last injunctions to remain steadfast in his faith. The mother, dotingly fond of him, and bent on saving him from a state, as she conceived, of utter ruin to his soul, strained every nerve to win him over to her communion. Her efforts were seconded by all the arts and influences which could be exerted by the priests with whom she was surrounded, but in vain. The boy had doted on his father; his father's last words, last look, the solemnity and fearfulness of his last hours, had all impressed themselves indelibly on his mind. He was proof against reasoning, against prayers, even against his mother's tears; until exasperated and in despair, and resolved, at the suggestion of a priest, to make one final trial of severity, she drove him from her door, and almost threatened to lay her curse upon him. But it was all in vain. He left her (this had happened in Ireland), and took refuge with the clergyman of the parish, who had supported him through all his trials. By him the talent which he possessed for painting had been discovered; and he had been introduced to the notice of a nobleman, who had enabled him to come abroad to study. The tale was short, simply, but affectingly told. And as Villiers turned away in thought, the abbé made a general remark on the evil and misery of mixed marriages; which led him to speak of his own particular opinions—of his own private recommendations to those over whom he possessed

influence—of the satisfaction which he had in knowing that those in whom he was most deeply interested—one especially, who was his own chosen charge (and Villiers understood the allusion), participated fully in his views, and was unalterably resolved to act on them. The good abbé sighed with affectionate compassion, as he made the communication; and there mixed with the compassion a pang of disappointment at the breaking up of his most darling hope; but his conscience reproved him. And Villiers, thanking him, and giving him to understand that he comprehended his meaning, assured him also of his own unchangeable determination to act upon the same principle, and of his desire that it should be known.

It had struck twelve the same night; the light was still burning in Villiers's room, and his servant was hurrying backwards and forwards with preparations for packing, when the abbé, to whom a letter had just been delivered, knocked gently at the door, and begged five minutes' conversation.

It was the good old man's last opportunity, his last effort. Wholly as he had composed himself more than once to face the disappointment of his dearest hopes, and to leave Villiers to himself, as the moment of Villiers's final departure approached, he had received another command from a quarter which he was bound to respect, and resolved to make one more attempt, to speak openly and fully, and urge what still remained to be urged, that the young Englishman might be won over to the Church of Rome, and (what the abbé would scarcely dare to confess to be equally the object of his prayers) might be united with Lady Eleanor.

It was no surprise to Villiers to see the abbé. Where minds are severally engaged in the same thoughts they fall together into the same acts. He

placed the abbé in an easy chair, sat by his side, took his hand, and with affectionate respect entreated him to speak without reserve, if he had any thing to communicate. And the grey light of dawn began to steal in through the half-closed curtains before that communication was closed. Villiers, on his leaving the room, threw himself on the bed, agitated, exhausted, alarmed, uncertain, full of vacillation once more; and at every wavering thought came in the vision of Lady Eleanor. He had gone through the other trials of his faith; had exposed the historical fallacies of Popery; had witnessed and shuddered at the moral perversions which followed upon its theory; had sifted the rationalising speculations on which its claims to empire were founded: one point remained untouched, and to this the abbé had addressed himself. Villiers closed his eyes; and in a feverish, distracted dream he fancied himself standing in a venerable cathedral; the service of the Church of England fell on his ears. He was kneeling, praying, when the building shook from its base; the pillars tottered; the roof cleft open till the stars were seen through the crevices; great masses of mortared stone, fragments of arches, bosses, columns, tombstones hurled themselves around him; a black chasm yawned beneath the altar and swallowed it up; the worshippers and priests fled with cries of terror: and as there gathered round him in their place a host of frightful demon visages screaming in triumph, Villiers saw through a distant aisle a figure—a female figure—beautiful, pure, innocent, and holy—the figure by whose side he had watched over his uncle's bed—beckoning him to escape, and to escape with her. It was the weakness, the distraction, the coldness, the irreverence, the approaching ruin of the English Church, which the abbé had been urging on his

thoughts. A ray of light fell on his eyes, and he awoke up to the sense of his trial. Alas! how many bitternesses, how many weaknesses, how many pangs of remorse and fear crowd often into that moment of awaking! Till he had raised himself from his pillow, partially dressed himself, knelt down, read, meditated as usual, even in spite of wandering thoughts and distracted affections, Villiers thought of postponing his departure; of remaining; of considering all that the abbé had urged, quietly and impartially with him. He would not see Lady Eleanor, he said to himself, more than was absolutely necessary. He could command his feelings. He need not suffer her to know what passed in his own mind: and it was cruel to desert her in the moment of her trial. He was bound to remain with his uncle: and to refuse to listen to the truth was obstinacy. He was bound to give to the objections of opponents a fair and candid consideration. His hand was on the bell to countermand his carriage, but his eye fell on the open Prayer-book on his table—on the words “Lead us not into temptation;” and when his servant came, his first word was to hasten the horses. He went to his uncle’s bed-side, who was still asleep, and much recovered. He sent Lady Eleanor’s maid to ask if she had any commands for England; but Lady Eleanor only sent a kind verbal message in reply. The carriage drove into the court-yard; and when the abbé pressed his hand while he yet lingered on the steps, and asked him if he would think on what he had heard last night, Villiers, with a deep sigh, replied, “I go to think; go to inquire.—God bless you; and bring us both to the truth. Drive on.” And the postilions whirled the carriage through the gate on its road to England.

As it turned the corner of the street Villiers's eye caught that of a man dressed—it almost seemed disguised—as a Jew, who stood with a young shabby boy in his hand, apparently watching the carriage. It was an eye whose expression he knew. Even in the boy there was something which touched him, he knew not why. He looked back as the carriage drove on ; but the man had disappeared. Villiers did not know that he had been lurking round the house the whole morning, or that he had been ever since Villiers's arrival in daily communication with the Italian porter, or that, as he followed the carriage with his eyes, his teeth firmly set, his face scowling with malignity, he had been secretly imprecating curses on him, curses on the abbé, curses on all that belonged to him. He did not recognise him as Mr. Pearce.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE great bell of Christ Church had long ceased to toll; the streets of Oxford were silent and deserted; and all but a few lights were extinguished in the dark quadrangle of ——— College, when the sleepy porter was summoned to answer a hasty knocking at the gate. It was opened to a tall gentlemanly figure, apparently just arrived from a long journey, and still in his travelling cloak and cap. He asked for Mr. Beattie's room.

"No. 12., one pair of stairs to the left," answered the obsequious porter, who suspected a stranger of rank, and proceeded to show him to the narrow archway and stone stairs which led to Beattie's room. The stranger tapped, heard the usual words "Come in;" and as he stood before Beattie himself, who rose from his large reading-desk, and shaded his eyes from the candle to receive his visiter, it was some seconds before they mutually exchanged recognitions.

"My dear Villiers!"

"My dear Beattie!"

"Where did you come from?"

"Before I answer your questions," said Villiers, "will you give me some tea?"

Beattie's tea-things, untouched, stood on a side-table, and his kettle was simmering on the hearth. And Villiers was soon installed in a large leather reading-chair, from which Beattie was obliged to remove its usual occupants, a heap of folios: and

the solitary reading-lamp having been exchanged for brighter lights, the simple-minded Beattie placed his stool by Villiers's side, and asked for an account of his movements. Villiers repeated to him every thing. When he told him of the recovery of his fortune, Beattie made no remark, offered no congratulations, only looked on him with more of melancholy, affectionate interest, as if such an event only exposed him to more perils and heavier responsibilities. When he spoke of his feelings towards Lady Eleanor, Beattie seemed alarmed, but was relieved by the frank and firm tone in which Villiers declared his resolution never to unite himself (he was compelled in a low voice to say "again") with one who was not united in the same church communion with himself. But when at last Villiers entered on the subject of his conversation with the abbé, on his doubts, his anxieties, his misgivings, Beattie covered his face with his hands and sighed deeply.

"You saved me once," said Villiers; "you gave me peace and satisfaction once: can you give it me now? — Peace and satisfaction!" he repeated, as if correcting himself: "alas! whatever befalls me, that must be for others."

Beattie did not move. He sat immersed in painful and anxious thought, sinking, it seemed, as he drooped his head, under a sense of fearful responsibility. Villiers also was silent. At last Beattie roused himself as the clock of St. Mary's struck twelve.

"You must leave me now," he said to Villiers, "for our hours, you know, do not permit late visitors. You will breakfast with me to-morrow, will you not?"

Villiers readily assented; and at the great gate, to which Beattie went with him to rouse the sleepy

porter, they parted with a warm but silent pressure of the hand.

When Beattie's servant came to his room the next morning he observed that his candle was nearly burnt out. He must have sat up very late, contrary to his usual practice. His Prayer-book lay open on the table, and the pages were still wet with tears. Several closely-written sheets of paper were lying on his desk, as if he had been striving to collect and arrange his thoughts. And as the servant knocked at the door of the little closet which served for his bedroom, he found him already drest and at his devotions.

Punctually as the chapel bell commenced he was taking his usual solitary walk under the avenue of horse-chestnuts in the garden, when he was joined by Villiers.

"You must take me with you into chapel," he said. "Shall I be considered an intruder?"

"Ten years since," said Beattie, "perhaps you would have been; but let us be thankful it is not so now. Ten years since, even in this place, even while we were retaining as a form the daily service, and employing it as a roll-call for our students, or even as a punishment, and secretly willing to abolish, or at least to shorten it,—even when it was thought unnecessary for any fellows to attend it, except a single tutor,—even then, I remember, there were some few, a very few, who understood and who valued this old form. But now this feeling is general. We seldom have strangers—our friends, I mean—staying with us without their attending our services; and you will find that the movement has spread in various directions through the country. The daily service is no uncommon thing at this day, even in our village churches."

"And this is owing," remarked Villiers, "to the Tracts for the Times?"

"It is owing," said Beattie, "to the good Spirit of God."

"Employing," returned Villiers, "as subordinate agents, those who first originated the movement in this place?"

"I never like," replied Beattie, "to dwell much on subordinate agency or secondary causes, either in the Church or in Nature. In either case it tends to veil from us, or to withdraw us from, the one great Cause. If we regard ourselves in this light, it engenders either conceit or timidity; and if others, it gathers us round them as heads and leaders of party."

"And yet," said Villiers, "you will not deny that the Church of England owes to those men who originated the Church movement here a great debt of gratitude?"

"Assuredly," replied Beattie; "I honour them myself most highly. But you must not forget that other causes and agencies were in operation at the same time, without which their efforts would have failed. They found a field well prepared by others for the seed which they proposed to sow. The extravagancies of an opposite system, the rash violence of the enemies of the Church, the spirit of docility and reverence which characterises our institutions in this place, were all in their favour; but the main arm of their strength was the Church itself. If they had come forward in any other character than as her servants, promulgating her avowed doctrines, sheltering themselves under her authority, ranging themselves by the side of her great teachers and masters in days gone by, and promising reverently to submit themselves to her guidance and control, be assured they would have been signally discomfited. We have no toleration here for founders of new sects and theories. And, so far as the great

body of the clergy is affected by our principles, they would have resented indignantly the attempt to influence them to join a party; they would have demanded a censure by Convocation sooner than adopt the principles which they have adopted, unless they had been convinced that they came to them with the sanction of the Church. I think you will see this soon. You will find that if the movement changes its ground, as it is now threatening to do, and becomes an individual speculation, it will be reprobated and condemned at once. You have not found, have you, that as the English clergy have been roused to think more deeply, and reason more acutely, they have become generally less attached to their Church?"

"I think not," replied Villiers.

"No," said Beattie, earnestly; "she may well be proud of this; that she holds us in a willing submission to herself, using no threats, employing no violence—permitting and encouraging us to examine her declarations freely, and ruling over us, not as a tyrant, but as a parent. There are some men," he continued, "young men, very young men, who are clamouring for a sterner, stricter rule; for a more imperious, sweeping dogmatism; for a more uncompromising exclusiveness. And this they would call strength and power. But the strength and power of the Church should be like to that which is exhibited in the analogy of His works who is the head of the Church; and we see nowhere there such marks of overwhelming despotism. The Almighty sets before us, in this life, good and evil, blessings and cursings, truth and falsehood, but permits us to choose, and judge, and walk in seeming liberty; and his Church, to be his minister, must do the same. Too great strictness and strength in the Church is a sign that there is something wrong

in her constitution or her temperament. There must be something out of order, some derangement of forces. But the chapel bell is down. In your time, do you remember, every one was allowed to straggle in till the Psalms were nearly over. This, also, you will find changed in many colleges."

As they returned from the chapel, Villiers could not help remarking on the improvement which he observed in the devotional appearance of the young men. Beattie corroborated it.

"And do you find," said Villiers, as they sat at the breakfast-table, "that this improvement extends to practical self-denial? Ten years since, if we had been breakfasting together, as now, on a Friday, we should not have confined our meal to dry bread; now, neither of us feel any difficulty in doing this openly. Is this also becoming common with the young men?"

"Not common yet," said Beattie. "But I have observed many things tending to it which are encouraging. Ten years since I remember a professor of divinity remarking to me that there were more dinner parties among the senior members in Oxford during Lent than at any other season. Now I have known many instances of young men giving their large parties early in the term, that they may not fall during Lent."

"And this is voluntary?" asked Villiers.

"Perfectly so," replied Beattie.

"And done in recognition of the authority of the Church?"

"Probably," said Beattie; "for it is done by those who are not in any way influenced, either by party or enthusiasm, scarcely by consistent religion, and who, therefore, can be governed only by a sense of authority." Beattie's servant here en-

tered the room with a box, which had just arrived by the mail.

"I know what this is," he said; "and you shall see it opened at once."

Villiers's interest was roused, and his admiration still more, when Beattie carefully unfolded from its wrappings of silver-paper an exquisitely-wrought chalice of silver-gilt, enamelled with Scripture subjects, and inlaid with gems.

"It is intended," said Beattie, "for our college chapel."

"And from whom does it come?" asked Villiers.

"This," replied Beattie, "I am not at liberty to publish. We have fallen latterly into a practice of giving what we give anonymously, and avoiding subscription lists. Ten years since this would have been sent in the form of a punchbowl, or a coffee-pot, or a silver corner-dish."

Villiers was silent, but thoughtful. At last he said—"And what is your own opinion of this revival in the English Church?"

"I look on it," said Beattie, "as the Athenians must have looked on the young shoot of olive, which sprang up out of the trunk in the citadel, when it had been cut down with axes and burnt with fire. It shows not only that life is not extinct, but that if not extinct after such a trial, humanly speaking, there is nothing which can extinguish it. It is one of the chief things which rouses my impatience, when I hear the Church of England lightly spoken of as weak and perishing."

"And yet other Churches," said Villiers, "have had their revivals also."

"Surely;" replied Beattie, "the foundation of every new monastic order in the Romish Church was intended as a revival. But observe the difference. In other instances the spirit has shot up in

some form of novelty ; it has emanated from some individual — has generated a party. Instead of adhering to existing laws and institutions, it has delighted to invent new ; it has cast off all restraint, and fed itself with enthusiasm and fanaticism. Such a revival indicates the weakness rather than the strength of the body in which it takes place. But the revival which we have witnessed in our own time has been, strictly speaking, a revival of the spirit of the Church, within the Church, under the control of the Church, encouraged by the ministers of the Church, throwing itself back upon the laws and the teaching of the Church, and placing itself from the first under external control and guidance. It is a natural, not an artificial revival. It has not been produced by stimulants, and therefore it is as much an evidence of the internal strength and vigour of the Church as the recovery without medicine of a man at the point of death is a proof of the strength of his constitution."

"And yet," said Villiers, "the Church of England ten years since was at the point of death."

"So," replied Beattie, "it seemed to us. Threatened by the people, treacherously protected and corrupted by the state, robbed of her revenues, mutilated in her bishoprics, disorganised and enfeebled in those collegiate bodies which ought to form her greatest strength, her authority neither asserted by herself nor recognised by others, her testimony set aside and supplanted by an empty rationalism, her education emptied of every thing which could give it life and power, her churches deserted, her children running off without a warning voice into every kind of dissent, and the population swelling like a running tide around her, and menacing to swallow her up, like those fabled springs destined

to overflow and drown the mortals who forget to keep them under cover and confined within their proper bounds — such was the condition of the Church. Who would have dared at that time to prophesy that it should, within ten years, simply by the assertion of its own principles, be more deeply rooted than ever in the affections of its children, more feared than ever by its enemies, more able than ever to take its stand as the guardian of this empire, and to spread out its arm to the most distant continents as the converter of the heathen? Yet surely this is now true."

"And yet," said Villiers, "there must have been some malformation, some secret mischief, which had reduced her to her previous state. Without some radical defect no church could so have fallen."

"My dear Villiers," said Beattie, after a pause, and placing his hands on his friend's shoulders, "will you endeavour to remain for five minutes in this position, standing upright without moving a single muscle?"

Villiers stopped (for they were now walking on the terrace in the college gardens) and endeavoured to do so, but found it impossible.

"Or," continued Beattie, "will you try and walk up to that plane-tree yonder in one straight line without a single divergence?"

Villiers shook his head.

"No," said Beattie, "it would be impossible; for the law of progression, as in human minds, and in individuals as in societies, is a law of continual oscillation. We bend from side to side, wavering at every step; if weak, falling wholly, not to rise again; if strong, recovering ourselves by some great effort, and advancing at each fresh struggle with more directness, but never upon this earth without a tendency to vary from the central line. Do not therefore measure the weakness of societies

by their oscillations, or even by their falls (for they are human, and cannot escape them), but by their recoveries — recoveries through their own internal strength, when to common eyes they seemed wholly lost. Look round on all the churches in the world, on all civil societies which history presents, and search if you can find an instance of any human polity recovering itself from oscillations so fearful as those by which the English Church has been shaken at times from her centre. Think what a tremendous shock to all opinions and all institutions was given by the stroke which severed her from the tyranny of Rome. And yet, though she bent for a time beyond her equilibrium, she righted, and recovered in her doctrine both the principle of authority and the talisman of an hereditary Catholicism, without which she would long since have been fractured to atoms, like the Protestant communions in Germany. She was saved here by the arm of the civil power, which grasped her (roughly indeed and tyrannically) when she had shaken off her hold upon the Papacy; but yet rescued her from falling wholly into that worst anarchy, the government of self-will. That arm itself was then fractured; and the Church fell to the ground, and to human eyes was utterly destroyed. And yet suffering, and persecution, and martyrdom, only purified and strengthened it; and it came out of the convulsions of the rebellion stronger than before — the monarchy supported by the Church, and the Church supported by the monarchy. The Revolution came; and the monarchy was split from top to bottom. It stood indeed, and a superficial view might not detect the flaw. But the principle of popular election, however disguised and disclaimed, was admitted into the constitution. And since then the Church has been placed to contend against it, breaking out as

it has done in a thousand different forms. She has contended with it under the most difficult circumstances ; her hands tied, her movements restricted, her principles corrupted, her resources curtailed, her operations betrayed by the necessity of recognising a nominal monarchy, which, in reality, was a democracy. If the monarchy had wholly disappeared, her course would have been plain and her opposition unfettered. But she has fought like a woman defending her house and husband against robbers ; her husband himself being all the time one of their accomplices, and endeavouring to silence and corrupt her. We measure strength," continued Beattie, " not by mere exertion, but by exertion against resistance, and under disadvantages. Think in this point of view on the very existence of the Church of England at this day as all but a miracle."

" And yet," said Villiers, " is not the existence of the Church of Rome a still greater miracle ?"

" Have you overlooked," said Beattie, " the fact that the Church of England all this time has been contending not only with secular powers and popular licentiousness, but with the strength of the Church of Rome, put out to crush her as its most dangerous opponent ; disguising itself under every variety of form, and ransacking all its resources ? Are you not aware how much of the popular movements against the Church of England has been fomented by Rome ? how earnestly Rome has bent herself to destroy us ? and still we are not yet lost. Every fresh degree of power which you think you recognise in the Church of Rome is another attestation to the strength of the Church of England, which, single-handed, has resisted and survived such aggressions."

" And yet," said Villiers, " think of the enormous power—of the wonderful organisation of the Church of Rome. Where are we to find this in the Church

of England? Look at her monastic orders, at her discipline, at her influence on the people, on kings, on learning, on education, on all that gives power to rulers. Surely the Church of England, by her side, is as an emaciated sick man or a mutilated cripple."

"Emaciated she is," said Beattie; "mutilated she has been. She is weak, and will long continue so—weak as Samson before his hair grew again—as Achilles robbed of his arms—as the Giant blinded for the moment. But if even in her weakness she has fought with the strong arm of popery, and not been yet destroyed, what will she do in her strength?"

"And yet," replied Villiers, "surely there is in popery a principle of power and of permanence which no other polity can realise. Think of the concentration of its forces round one centre; of its unity of action; of its emancipation from all secular control; of its sternness, its exclusiveness, its uncompromising demand of subjection, its unflinching singleness of aim, the enthusiasm which it contrives to awaken, both in the ambitious and the devout; of its command over the imagination, of the elasticity of its practice coupled with the immobility of its theories. Remember how amidst all her errors, and worse than errors, she preserves axioms of truth, and misleads her followers chiefly in questions of fact, which they are unable to examine. Observe how she bends to her purpose every passion of human nature; how she unites the most licentious indulgence with the most intolerant asceticism. Weigh well the power that lies even in the extravagance of her claims to empire over both mind and body; and when you reflect on the willingness of weak man to fall down and become the slave of any one who professes power to govern, and willingness to save, and a divine commission to justify his acts

and fulfil his promises, will you venture to indulge hopes that any such power can ever be developed in any other Christian communion, much less in the Church of England, which from the very nature of its constitution is distracted between double principles, and encumbered and enfeebled by its own professions of moderation."

"Villiers, dear Villiers," said Beattie, "have you not shifted your ground? You have spoken of the strength of Rome, most truly. But when you ask if such a strength can ever be developed in the Church of England, tell me, would you wish that it should be developed? When I speak of strength in the Church, I speak of such a strength as a Christian may pray for, and a church delight in. I do not ask for a sick man that he may recover his muscular force by becoming a maniac, though a maniac be stronger than a giant. And when you ask whether the Church of England could ever become in herself as powerful as the Church of Rome, I answer, God forbid! for I know not how such an object could be accomplished without her constructing a system equally false, equally sinful, equally unchristian. Be assured that truth, that goodness, that reason, that Christianity, must in this world appear weak and wavering, compared with bold, unscrupulous, unbalanced vice. It must recognise a whole circle of duties, and this must beget occasional doubt and timidity. It must be humble, and therefore want self-confidence. It must cling earnestly to truth; and truth, in this world of darkness, lies beneath a veil, and can neither be comprehended by our own eyes, nor exhibited to others, except mixed up with seeming inconsistencies, which destroy its fascination, and perplex and repel those who are easily attracted by the seeming simplicity of falsehood. It owes allegiance to an external law, which

law is often difficult to consult, and still more difficult to understand in its precise application. Hence it must be slow and submissive. It is passionless, and will seem to want energy. It is disinterested, and therefore without the stimulus of selfishness. It is as a stranger in the world, and the world will not cling to it. It has faith, and therefore despises and throws aside the instruments of human power. It has no object but obedience upon earth; and the voice of a martyr at the stake will sound to human ears far fainter than that of a conqueror on a field of battle. And yet, Villiers, strength, real strength, may be found, even in this form, far greater than in the shape of an uncompromising, universal, infallible, spiritual empire, which has no foundation for its power but ambition and intrigue. Look up," continued Beattie, "at that beautiful spire," and he pointed to the spire of St. Mary's, which rose above them into the clear blue sky from the midst of its forest of pinnacles. "If you saw two men, one hurling himself down headlong from the summit of that spire, and another balancing himself on the point, in which would you recognise more strength?"

"Certainly," said Villiers, "I should see no proof of strength in the act of falling."

"No," replied Beattie, "nor in the indulgence of a single passion, nor in the headlong pursuit of a single object, nor in the carrying out of a single principle, nor in the exercise of rule when all opposing forces are subjected to us, nor in a claim to universal dominion, nor in a dream of infallible authority, nor in the threat of tyrannical punishment upon all who disobey our will, nor in any excess or extravagance, whether of reason or of affection, in which the mind is possessed and carried away by an idea, instead of possessing and subjecting it to the

control of strict external laws. Even so it is with the Church of Rome. Its very unity is the proof of its weakness. It has no doubts ; it admits no opposition ; it sets itself no bounds ; it is without scruple, without hesitation, without difficulty ; it can adapt itself to all circumstances, carry out its one unvaried purpose by any means, resolve any perplexities, fathom any problem, indulge any inclination, enrol in its body any variety of character ; and therefore, with the physical strength of a giant it has the moral weakness of a child : and moral strength and moral weakness are the objects to which we must look in the constitution of a church. But a church which, while it asserts its own independence and authority, can submit itself to the authority of another power as equally ordained of God, which can break loose from a tyranny without falling into a democracy, which can demand obedience to authority while it exercises and encourages free thought, which can decide on necessary questions without intruding on things unnecessary, which can hold fast an unwavering faith while it disclaims any right to dogmatise presumptuously, which can feel and act upon the sense of error and wrong in others, and yet shrink from harshly judging and condemning them, which can reverence antiquity and yet admit of improvement, which can so embrace and set forth counterbalancing truths, that while equally supported by authority they are difficult to reconcile by reason, and which will open its arms to receive her children, not upon terms of her own invention, but upon the terms prescribed to her by another,—such a church, I conceive, in the very doubts which she acknowledges, even in the seeming inconsistencies which she encounters, even in the difficulties which she prepares for herself in her apparent hesitations, and scruples, and vacillations, exhibits an

internal self-command, a power of vision, and a power of action, which, even in this world, is worthy of all admiration, and in another must triumph ultimately over all persecution. It has pleased Almighty God to place the Church of England upon the pinnacle of his temple, where he placed his Catholic Church of old ; and so long as she is there supported, though with a bruised foot, and trembling hand, and fearful eye, so long I recognise in her a power which cometh from above, and which none but God can supply to his own chosen and favoured servants."

"And yet," repeated Villiers (after they had stood some minutes by the side of the plane-tree, from which a large arm had been recently severed)—
"and yet the Church of England is weak ; we cannot deny it."

"Yes," replied Beattie, "weak in her organisation ; not weak in her principles, or her formularies, or her theory. In these, for all practical purposes, she possesses greater elements of power and durability even than the Church of Rome. Look, for instance, at the very fact which is too often fixed on as a blemish, and as a source of imbecility. One of her first fundamental principles is obedience in all temporal matters to the civil power. While she asserts her own independence and supremacy in spiritual things, she admits the same independence, and supremacy, and divine right, in the State. Logically, the position is a paradox : superficially viewed, it threatens to enslave her. And yet what is the truth ? If you would plant any institution or polity firmly upon the ground, you must place it upon two foundations. It must have two feet to rest on, that when one gives way, or slips, as in this world it always will do, the other may recover it. Rest all upon a single power, embark all on a solitary plank, and when that fails all is lost. Thus

in the English Church, allied as she is, or associated, or, rather, combined and amalgamated, with the State, when the State becomes weak, or corrupt, or fails in its duty, the Church is ready to support and correct it. And when the Church is exposed to mischief, then the State is ready to interfere. We may not be able to measure precisely the right degree to which these interferences should be carried. Certainly in all such exigencies there will be occasional excesses. But through these successive oscillations the right line may still be preserved; and the history of the English Church, the history of its extension, of its prosperity, of its durability, is to be traced through a series of actions and counteractions between the State and itself, and so will continue until some rash and foolish hand severs the two; and both spiritual and temporal power, left to themselves, will fall without an arm to save them."

"I understand you so far," said Villiers. "But if this double power, this binary construction of influences, is essential to the preservation of a polity, how is it that the Church of Rome has maintained her position with her perfect unity and simplicity of system?"

Beattie paused, as if in surprise. "And have you, then," he asked, "been so blinded by the professions of Rome as not to see that she also has acted upon the binary principle, and by it has consolidated her power, and maintains her existence? What would Rome have been if she had not employed the civil arm in the first period of her history? How did she prosecute her aggressions except by the aid of a power which derived its forces from a source different from her own? It was not the bishops of Rome who conquered the empire of popery, but the bishops of Rome allied with kings and emperors, who, even while they acted as the

ministers of a church, claimed to themselves supremacy in the state. Rome indeed boasted, and demanded, and pretended to rights and authority far beyond the Church of England, or the Catholic Church of old; but whenever she practically succeeded in her objects, it was by an alliance with some civil power, upon terms as near as possible the same as those which we recognise in England. And when the State became weak and impotent, or rebellious, and unwilling to do her bidding, to what other machinery do you attribute the power of Rome?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Villiers, "to her monastic bodies."

"Yes," continued Beattie, "to her monastic bodies, beginning from the first societies of recluses and penitents to the last grand and fearful conspiracy of Jesuitism. And what are they but a civil power—an organisation, framed as it was by Rome independent of the regular government of the Church—having a power of its own, and a power founded on temporal privileges and possessions—on wealth, character, landed property, talent, combination, every thing secular? No, Villiers, do not dream of a state of things in which a spiritual power can exist detached from a temporal power in some shape or other, or a temporal power detached from a spiritual. Keep them combined, yet distinct: subject them one to the other, mutually and reciprocally: be not afraid of the logical paradox, but try the construction practically, and you will find it the only source of strength and permanence."

"Alas!" said Villiers, "where is it to be found now in the English Church? Has not the State all but cast it off? Will she not soon be compelled to stand before the world with only her spiritual blessings, and spiritual menaces to overawe her rebellious

children? And when she is thus left solitary, upon your own principle and prophecy, what is to be her fate but ruin?"

Beattie made no reply; but he took Villiers's arm and led him out of the gardens into the quadrangle, and up a flight of narrow stone steps, which landed them on the leads of one of the highest towers in Oxford.

"Look round you," said Beattie.

And Villiers did look, and gazed with admiration on that glorious maze of spire, and pinnacle, and turret, and dark cloistered courts, in which lay green lawns and trim gardens embedded like jewels, every stone calling up some recollection of the past, and even the abodes of common life tinged by them with a sacred gloom.

"Have you ever thought," said Beattie at last, "to what arm, to what power the Church of England has been indebted, under Providence, for its revival, for its existence at this day?"

"I have," said Villiers; "it was to this place; to this university. It was Oxford which first stemmed the torrent of revolution, and recalled England to her senses."

"No," replied Beattie, "it was not Oxford—not the university only, but the colleges of the university, which, if the Church has been saved, saved her at that crisis. The university is a creature of the crown, and can be destroyed by the crown. He that makes can unmake also. But these colleges were not creatures of the crown. They are independent bodies, holding their property and their influence by the same laws on which the peasant and the noble hold their cottage and their castle. And it was because the State could not touch these colleges, that the colleges, and through them the university, were enabled to resist the tyranny and

folly into which democracy would have driven the State, and turned its aggressions against the Church. But for these colleges all would have been lost."

"And how," asked Villiers, "do you connect this with our past conversation?"

"Dear Villiers!" replied Beattie, gravely, "when foolish, thoughtless young men in our own Church, or enemies of that Church from without, speak contemptuously of weakness in the English Church, and how it is to be removed, and of its desertion by the State, and of the want of organisation to enforce her claims, or of any temporal power to enable her to regain her hold over the affection and obedience of a revolted population, think of what you see here, and it will give the answer. These are the piles and buttresses by which we may support her even now; these are the bulwarks and towers which no human force will be able to overthrow; these are the hands (only let them be multiplied and stretched out wherever the work of the Church is to be done) with which that work is to be accomplished. Close up your hand," he continued; and, compressing all but Villiers's little finger, he said, "Now try with that little finger to force this iron bolt into its staple."

Villiers tried, but in vain.

"Grasp it," said Beattie, "with your whole hand, with a college of fingers." And the bolt shot into its place.

CHAP. XXIV.

DAY after day passed, and Villiers found himself still lingering at Oxford, sharing Beattie's simple breakfast, accompanying him in his evening walks by the side of the river, dining with him in the hall, and kneeling beside him in the chapel. He saw few persons beyond the ordinary society of the common room, for Villiers was not fond either of exhibiting, or being exhibited, or seeing others exhibited. He had little curiosity to see men who were talked of in the world, merely that he might observe their countenances, or watch for some peculiarity of manner or expression, or be enabled to say that he knew Mr. —, and Dr. —, and Mr. —; his knowledge being confined to the formal generalities of a morning visit. And he cherished a painful impression that where the thoughts of men are laid open to the world in their writings, it is as well not to seek for more close intimacy, lest valuable illusions should be destroyed, and inconsistencies of conduct be discovered. It may be, that Villiers was too proud and independent either to lead or be led. In the mean time he made his observations. He remarked in the habits of the place a return to more simple living: conversation was more deeply imbued with a reverential and religious tone. As he passed through the dark quadrangle at night, he heard less frequently than in his own days—far less frequently—the sound of noise and revelry. The general deportment of the older members struck him as far more spiritualised and

elevated ; and that of the young as more chastened and subdued. There was much indeed to please him in the whole tone of the society into which he was thrown, and in which he was received at once with a frankness and courtesy, which, while it recognised his own rank, asserted also a rank and independence of their own for those who paid it. And yet, thought Villiers, these men, in this age of wealth and adoration of wealth, in which every man's consequence is measured by his money, possess perhaps only an annual pittance, scarcely sufficient for the ordinary comforts of life. Villiers did not remember, that though individually poor, collectively they were rich, and that while their own poverty secured them from conceit, their corporate wealth gave to them a consciousness of position and self-consequence which secured them from humiliating dependence. Villiers was surprised to see the general similarity of opinion which prevailed among them, combined with independence of thought. He watched with pleasure the little interchanges of courtesy which prevented the familiarity of friends from sliding into too great a liberty. He saw the power which united action gave them, both in the work of education and in the furtherance of any object necessary for the good of the Church. Especially he was struck with the voluntary deference and respect paid to the head of the society in which he was living ; and with the absence of all pretension, or selfishness, or conceit, even in those whose talents and position claimed for them the greatest authority. He was even amazed at the liberality, the profusion, with which demands of charity were answered from men who had nothing to depend on but their little annual stipends. When he remarked these things to Beattie, and asked to what cause he could attribute

it, Beattie's reply was still the same, "to the collegiate principle." Place men in colleges, he would say, place those colleges under a good system, and let that system be subjected to a proper superintendence from the bishops of the Church, and you will form men like these every where.

"And yet," he continued, with a sigh, "even here all is not right. There is much still to be done to bring us to a perfect state, many good practices to be recalled, many forgotten statutes to be enforced; and the stream which was flowing so steadily and so rapidly in this direction of improvement has met a check, which will throw it back for years. You observed," he said, "a specimen of the mischief at work yesterday after dinner."

"Do you allude," asked Villiers, "to that forward conceited person who spoke so fluently and so petulantly in the common room, on the subject of Popery and the Church?"

"That," replied Beattie, "is one of the leaders, if such a boy can be called a leader, in the new movement. He has written much which has startled and alarmed us."

"But he has only just taken his degree," said Villiers, with astonishment.

"Not long since," replied Beattie: "but in this day, when every one can publish what he likes, and as he likes, and when he likes, and publish anonymously, it is in the power of mere boys to circulate doctrines and rouse fears, the mischief of which cannot be cured by the oldest and the wisest."

"And when he was speaking so contemptuously of the Church, and so boldly in excuse for the corruptions of Rome, was he speaking," asked Villiers, "merely sentiments of his own, or such as others would share with him?"

“Sentiments, I hope,” replied Beattie, “which only a few — a very few — would respond to ; but still which may be traced even here. But you have been abroad, and are not well read in the theological publications of the day. And yet,” he continued, “I fancied, when you first came to me the other evening, that you had fallen in with them, and had been yourself tainted with this new poison.”

Beattie covered his face with his hands as he had done before, and once more seemed lost in painful and anxious thought.

“And what then,” asked Villiers, gently, “is this new theory at which you are so much alarmed? Surely such a person as that young man in your common room cannot be an object of anxiety. Surely —, —, —, and others like them, who originated the movement in the Church, cannot have abandoned it to such hands, and cannot be unable to control it?”

Beattie sighed deeply. “I will not reply to your last question,” he said, “because I could not speak without seeming to condemn ; and to condemn is not my place. We are responsible for all our deeds, for our silence as well as for our utterance, not to individual brethren, but to the Church and to its Head.”

“And what then,” continued Villiers, drawing his chair nearer to his friend — “what is this new theory, or heresy, or what may it be called, which so alarms you?”

“Alarm,” replied Beattie, “is not perhaps the proper word. We have no right to be alarmed at any thing which befalls the Church, in which all that happens must ultimately work together for its good. Call it rather vexation ; for so much of these extravagancies proceeds from a silly love of

notoriety, that I am afraid to dignify it with too much attention."

"And what is the nature of the extravagance?" asked Villiers. But before his companion could reply, a step was heard at the door, a submissive knock was given, and on Beattie's giving the usual permission to enter, a stout, thick-built, swarthy man, with sunken and cunning eyes, and his features covered with a thick beard and enormous whiskers, put his head in, as if afraid to venture without reconnoitring his ground. Villiers turned to see his entrance, and as the man's eye fell upon him he hastily retired, muttering an apology, and saying that he would return when the gentleman was disengaged. And though Beattie called after him to enter, he hurried hastily down the stairs.

"Who is that man?" asked Villiers. "Have I not seen his face before?"

"He is a stranger to me," said Beattie; "some foreigner, I suppose, with a petition. But I was about to tell you something of our new heresies here. Villiers resumed his attention, and Beattie proceeded.

"I need not tell you, Villiers, how natural it is, when power is used against us unjustly and tyrannically, to rise against it in resentment, and not content with throwing it back within due bounds, to annihilate it altogether. None of us should be surprised that the aggressions of the State upon the Church within these few years should have produced a tendency in the Church to reciprocate an aggression upon the State. Perhaps the seat and beginning of this mischief may be traced to a dream of spiritual empire and ambition, fostered by the just claims which the Church has revived to her spiritual independence and authority, but exaggerated far beyond the sanction either of history or

reason, and exaggerated by the natural provocations caused by the alternate imbecility and violence of our civil government. There is a struggle to place the Church once more in a position of power. It is felt, felt most truly, that there can be no peace for the country, no safety for truth, no right encouragement for goodness, no strength in the government, until the spiritual authority of the Church is once more recognised. To re-establish it, it is not necessary to subvert the authority of the State; but young, rash men, once possessed with an idea, are carried away by it. They would make the Church the only power, and subject the State to her. To do this they must divest the State of its own sacred character and divine institution; and they hesitate less at this profanation, because the powers that be are now wielded by the populace; and thus their very hatred for democracy leads them to adopt the worst theory of democracy, and, like the Jesuits, they become at once political radicals and spiritual despots."

Villiers recalled his conversation with Macarthy, but remained silent.

"When," continued Beattie, "they look round for means to realise this dream of ecclesiastical empire, they see that in each single nation the civil power must be stronger than the Church. The only hope for the Church in such a struggle must be in a close union with other foreign Churches. Hence the vision of a so-called Catholic Church, not distributed into various branches connected at one root, harmonising in essential articles of faith, communicating in all works of love, but gathered round one visible local centre, and formed into a monarchy upon earth."

"It is a vision," said Villiers, "very natural, very romantic; far more easily understood, and seem-

ingly far more capable of realising the ends of the Church, than the true doctrine of a Catholic body, ramifying from one root, and each branch retaining its individual existence together with its corporate unity."

"And it fails," said Beattie, "only in a few points — that it has no sanction in the primitive constitution of the Church, and on examination is discovered to be as unsound in theory as it has been proved to be mischievous in practice."

"It may be so," sighed Villiers.

"But the dream," continued Beattie, "has been once realised — realised in the papacy; and hence their eyes are turned to Rome with a strange mixture of envy and wonder."

"And this accounts," said Villiers, "for the soft and gentle terms in which they speak of Rome; for their unwillingness to believe ill, or to hear ill, of her."

"Yes," said Beattie; "while they do not hesitate to exhaust ridicule and reproach upon the follies of what they think the opposite extreme (though it is in reality the same), while they anathematise every thing like private judgment, self-will, disobedience, want of faith, irreverence to antiquity, they know so little of the real history and nature of popery, and are so completely blinded by its pretensions, that they would throw a veil over all the enormities into which popery has fallen by precisely the same vices, and seem totally ignorant that the whole of popery (so far as it is a development of the doctrine of a universal spiritual monarchy) is only a pre-development of the spirit of dissent — just as the tyrannies of Greece were identical with their democracies."

"Something of this tendency," said Villiers, "was

observable, was it not, in the very earliest writings of the Oxford school ? ”

“ Something,” answered Beattie. “ But it seemed excused by the violent, thoughtless abuse which Puritanism had heaped even upon the Catholic parts of the Romish system, and therefore upon our own Church. It was necessary to defend what was true in popery. And we tolerated it more readily from the excess of our aversion to liberalism, which was then triumphant, and because the apology for the good parts of popery was coupled with the most unflinching denunciations and warnings against the evil.”

“ And this,” said Villiers, “ has now been changed ? ”

“ It has,” said Beattie. “ Followers have learned to speak softly and gently of every thing in that system, and leaders have uttered no warning against it.”

“ And yet,” asked Villiers, “ however fair and specious the papal supremacy may be in theory, how is it that men who are acquainted with the history of the Primitive Church, and who appeal to its authority, can reconcile themselves to such a palpable usurpation and novelty ? ”

“ In the first place,” said Beattie, “ they are young men, and not learned men. Their knowledge of ecclesiastical history is limited, for the most part, to modern compilations ; and those compilations they have chosen to seek in writers of the Romish communion. As for any deep and accurate knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquity, or the writings of the Fathers, it would be absurd to expect it from men only a few years emancipated from their boyish studies, and most of them more disposed to talk and write than to read and think.”

“ And yet,” said Villiers, “ they must have some knowledge of history ; they cannot be so utterly

and absurdly ignorant as not to know that the Romish supremacy is a novelty, and is allowed to be such even by their own controversialists."

"They have two theories," replied Beattie; "one derived from one Romish authority, and the other from another. One is the right of development; the other, that even usurpation may be justified by prescription. They have fallen thus, in the former, into the worst doctrine of the liberalism of the day, in opposition to which the movement commenced; and in the latter they not only show themselves ignorant of the fact that in the English Church the papal usurpations can claim no prescription, because they were constantly protested against, but they also put forward a maxim utterly destructive of the very foundations of the Church, and of all positive institutions of God."

Villiers sighed. "But," he continued, after a pause, "if these men hold this theory, they must consider separation from Rome not only as inexpedient, but as criminal. They must not only condemn the Reformation and the Reformers, but they must be anxious to restore the English Church to the Romish communion without delay."

"Such, I believe," said Beattie, "is the case. Remember, I am not speaking of any individuals. I will not be led into imputing motives, or censuring conduct, in others; much less do I mean to say that such notions are general: but in some I do believe they prevail."

"And they must believe," added Villiers, "that the English Church, on being severed from Rome, forfeited many great privileges—perhaps even her sacramental power. Can it be otherwise?"

"I," said Beattie, "could not find any way out of this dilemma, which would not also justify every kind of dissent. But others may. At least, I trust

they have some honest solution of the problem, otherwise I cannot understand that they should be able to remain, as they do, in the Church of England."

"Surely," said Villiers, "you do not mean to say that any man, seriously and firmly embracing such a theory, can remain in the Church? How can they believe reunion with Rome to be necessary for the validity of the Sacraments, and therefore for salvation? how, even, can they desire it on the ground of expediency, without striving to accomplish it? and how can they strive to accomplish it while remaining within the bosom of our own Church?"

"You might have added," said Beattie, "necessary for the validity of their own orders."

"Their own orders!" exclaimed Villiers, springing up,— "their own orders! Do you mean that any English clergyman, any honest man holding such opinions, can continue to exercise his functions?"

Beattie sighed deeply.

"Seriously," resumed Villiers, "would you have me believe that there are men, clergymen in the English Church, who not only profess such doctrines, but, professing them, think it possible to retain their commission in that Church, and secretly to use their influence for bringing it over to popery?"

"You ask me questions," said Beattie, "which I would rather not answer; but I know that it is not impossible for clergymen in the Church to hold these opinions, and to remain exercising their functions in it, upon the ground that subscription to the articles of that Church is not incompatible with a recognition of the decrees of the Council of Trent."

Villiers sat for some time silent, as if struck with amazement.

"Beattie," he said, at last, "what would our

courts of law say to an officer in the Queen's service, who, when a French army was invading this country, should not only, as a theory, think subjection to France desirable, but should also conceive it his duty to further that object by every means in his power, especially by the influence which his commission gave him with the soldiers of his regiment?"

"That he was a traitor," said Beattie.

"And what," continued Beattie, "if instead of going over at once to the enemy, he remained under his colours, only secretly and fraudulently throwing out insinuations, and projecting plans, and carrying on correspondences, and assimilating his practices to those of the enemy, and endeavouring to discontent his soldiers with their position by repeated sarcasms upon England and panegyrics upon France, and lamentations over the struggle by which the freedom of England was to be maintained? What if he defended himself with alleging that he could not act as an individual, that he waited till the whole army should throw down their arms, and that in the mean time he felt himself at liberty to prepare and stimulate them gently so to do? What if he satisfied his conscience by pleading that the good of England was his only object, though he fancied that good to lie in enslavement to the power of France?"

"I should say," exclaimed Villiers, interrupting him—but he checked himself. "No, Beattie," he said after a pause, "let us not judge others, lest we be judged ourselves. Let us leave such men, and such consciences, to the judgment of One who sees the heart, and to whom they are responsible. I dare not judge any one."

"Neither," said Beattie, "will I. But it is my lecture-hour, and we must separate."

CHAP. XXV.

THEY did not meet again till the bell was ringing for the hall dinner. There was but a small party ; and as they assembled round the great Gothic fire-place, while the servants were carrying the dinner to the high table, Villiers was introduced to a foreigner, a French abbé, who had been invited by the same young man whose forward and rash language had attracted his observation on a previous day. The abbé was evidently a man of education, quick and acute in his remarks, and keenly bent upon observing every thing that passed. His manner affected a politeness which bordered upon fulsomeness ; and he showed particular anxiety to become acquainted with Beattie, and to draw him into conversation. He threw out many innuendos and covert suggestions, which might have led to the subject which generally occupied attention, namely, the state of the Church in England ; but Beattie quietly permitted them to drop, and turned the conversation to questions of general literature. The abbé was not to be repulsed. He ventured, at last, to make comments on the characters and writings of some of the most conspicuous among the leaders of the Oxford movement ; and, with a want of tact not unfrequently found in a manœuvring mind, he even boldly questioned Beattie on his own opinions. This took place in the Common Room ; but Beattie made some excuse for going to the other side of the fire-place, and rang the bell for coffee, while the abbé, a little discomfited, threw

himself upon Villiers with similar curiosity, but was once more defeated by Beattie returning to Villiers; and pleading business with him, he took him to his own room.

"You seemed very reluctant to gratify the abbé," said Villiers, as they ascended the stairs.

"Very reluctant?" answered Beattie. "I am not satisfied with his appearance; and I do not like the admission amongst us of foreigners of the Romish communion, who come without introduction and without object, as far as they profess, but who, I cannot but suspect, are acting as spies upon all that passes among us at this critical moment. I am not fond of meeting them myself, still less of introducing them to our general society, where we speak often unguardedly, as round our own firesides; while, in reality, we are in a public room, and open to the observation of strangers. In addition to this, I entertain a most serious objection to associating on terms of familiarity with Romanists. They believe us heretics; we believe them in this country to be at least schismatics. In general society we must lay aside the appearance of such a belief, and act hypocritically; and the hypocrisy often ends, with us, at least, in the opinion that our differences are of no moment."

"And would you act in this exclusive manner to all who differ from you in religion?" said Villiers.

"To all," answered Beattie, "who are not themselves members, and who do not allow myself to be a member, of the Catholic Church. I know no other bond of union in society to which we can trust but the bond of the Church. And I am sure that to confine ourselves within the limits and combinations which she has formed for us is a far safer and a far better security for peace and concord than to endeavour to throw down or overlook these party-

walls ; and frame a new heterogeneous body upon no principle but that of arbitrary fusion, and the negation of all positive truth. But in the case of Romanists," he continued, "the inducements to this caution are, with me, far stronger than with any other sectarians. I have studied the history of Popery, and cannot but regard it in the light of an aggressive intriguing conspiracy, aiming at universal empire—an empire professedly spiritual, but essentially secular. I speak, remember, of the popery of Rome ; not of the catholic elements of truth and goodness, which it contrived to preserve in its system. I know that at this moment, as often before, the agents of Rome are exerting their utmost efforts to embarrass the English Church ; that they have emissaries in every part of the empire ; that their operations are not confined to doctrinal discussions, but are deeply mixed up with political movements, even with insurrectionary disturbances, in England as well as in Ireland. Such has been their conduct at all times ; but the present is a favourable moment, and they are turning it to their purpose with more than common enterprise and assiduity. There are a few persons among us—the persons of whom we spoke this morning—who laugh at all such suspicions, and seem to take delight in playing with firebrands, and walking about blindfold on the edge of a precipice. Whether they are right or wrong, time will show. In the mean time, I avoid, as much as possible, the society of foreign popish priests. We cannot meet for controversy ; and I can hold no other voluntary correspondence with the avowed enemies of my Church but controversy. Where, indeed, a person of a different communion comes and asks for a serious discussion upon any difficulties which may occur to him, the case is different. For instance, that Jewish-looking man,

who came to my rooms the other morning. I like neither his looks nor his manner; but I have not hesitated to see him more than once."

"And who is he?" asked Villiers. "I caught but one glimpse of him, and fancied I had seen him before."

"He tells me," said Beattie, "that he is a Polish Jew; that he was at Rome (perhaps you may have seen him there); and that a Father Matthias, of the English college, converted him to Romanism. He became, however, dissatisfied with what he heard and saw of their system, particularly with their adoration of images, and came to England. And here, he says, he has met with such a number of sects among Protestants, and has been so harassed by the doubts and difficulties which they have raised against each other, that he is even thinking of returning either to Judaism or Popery, if he cannot be satisfied with the doctrines of our own Church."

Villiers shook his head. "Not a very promising state of mind," he said.

"I fear not," replied Beattie. "Indeed, few states could be more unpromising. And there is something in his look so full of cunning, and, at times, even of malignity, that I should refuse to have any thing to say to him, except that I do not like to omit any opportunity of possibly doing good. He seems remarkably anxious to hear my opinions on Popery, and is at times very abusive against it himself, with the view, I am inclined to think, of trying if I am willing to defend it."

"Has he asked for money?" said Villiers.

"No," answered Beattie. "Had he done this, I should be inclined to suspect at once that he belonged to a class of swindlers who not unfrequently obtain access to us here under pretence of religious difficulties or persecutions, and seldom fail to prey

upon our unsuspecting benevolence. But he describes himself as provided with means of his own."

Villiers shook his head again. "I confess," he said, "that, were I you, I should be even more on my guard against such a man than against an avowed foreign ecclesiastic. When I was in America I became acquainted with a person who, from circumstances, had been thrown very much behind the scenes with the emissaries of Rome. He mentioned to me several instances where most serious evil had resulted from their intrigues."

Beattie sat musing for some little time. "I scarcely needed," he said, "this caution. But many similar facts are known to me, and, I assure you, I am on my guard. And now let us turn to a more agreeable subject. While I am making tea, will you find out that noble passage of Burke, in his 'French Revolution,' where he speaks of the destruction of the monasteries, and of the value of the principles of incorporation in the Church, and in society generally?"

"Can it be so late?" said Villiers, while they were still discussing the use and abuse of collegiate bodies in the Church. "Is that twelve?"

And the deep-toned clock of St. Mary's, followed by strokes from many another spire and tower, compelled them to separate for the night. Beattie followed him down the stone stairs, which were already dark, the lamps having burnt out. The street was empty. But as Villiers passed down to the Angel Inn, where he was staying, close at the corner of the street which leads into the dark Radcliffe Square, between St. Mary's and All Souls' College, two men were standing, with their backs to him, engaged in deep conversation, but sheltered, under the shadow of the wall, from the light of the moon. They were speaking earnestly in French,

and Villiers fancied that he heard his own name mentioned ; and as he turned to look at them as he passed, he was surprised to see the Jew in company with the French ecclesiastic whom he had met that day at dinner.

“I tell you I am sure. He is as great a heretic as ever ; and so they are both,” was all that Villiers caught as he moved on. It was too little to justify him in stopping to demand an explanation ; but he resolved to prosecute some inquiries in the morning. He went into the coffee-room to write a letter, which the sleepy waiter promised to commit carefully to the driver of the mail, which passed through to Hawkstone at two o'clock in the morning ; and as he was going up stairs to his room, the chambermaid met him, with apologies for having shifted him to another apartment, — one, she said, more airy and convenient ; the other had been wanted as part of a suite for a family. Villiers made no remonstrance. His new room was preferable to the other. His servant had moved all his dressing apparatus, as if no change had been effected. And after trying the lock of a door, which seemed to lead into an adjoining room, and finding it fastened on the other side, he sat down, trimmed his candle, and opened his desk to examine some papers. His eye fell on a packet sealed with black, and carefully secured. It contained documents, which he never parted with, full to him of bitter recollections, and which yet he never looked on without some gleam of hope that they might one day restore to him his child. He opened it, and the tears fell thick upon the papers. The certificate of his unhappy marriage, memoranda of all the facts relating to the loss of his boy, as minute an account as could be obtained of every point which might lead to his recognition, and which had been drawn up, by Beattie's care, at Naples, while Vil-

liers himself was lying in his illness; some family papers of his wife's, relating to her own birth and connections; and the miniature of his wife herself, in all her beauty.—Villiers once more, for the thousandth time, perused and reperused these precious memorials, until a heavy step passing his door, and entering the adjoining room, roused him from a sort of stupor, and he prepared to lie down. Once, as he was undressing, he fancied he heard a slight grating sound, as if some one was trying the handle or the lock of the door, but it did not return, and, resting his head on his pillow, he was soon asleep.

He rose soon (for it was Sunday morning), that he might attend the early Communion with Beattie. It was one of the last days which he proposed to pass in Oxford, and, except the hours of Divine service, he spent the greater part of it with Beattie. It was a time of deep and solemn reflection to him; and softened and elevated by the feelings which Oxford, more than any other place, breathes upon a Sabbath rest, he spoke unreservedly to his friend of the future as well as the past; of his repentance; his submission to the will of God; his recognition of the hand of Providence in the judgment with which he had been afflicted; of his earnest desire to devote the remainder of his life to the service of God and the Church; of his resolution to divert his thoughts from the great temptation which he felt would interrupt that purpose if he once involved himself in a union even with the most admirable of women, severed from him by her religious faith. Beattie listened to him, as they paced backwards and forwards on the broad smooth level lawn of St. John's garden, silently, but not without emotion.

“I shall look to you, dear Beattie,” he said, “for much assistance, for advice, for suggestions.”

But Beattie shook his head. He was not fond

of giving advice ; and he had no great confidence in his own suggestions. It was one of his first maxims to undertake no responsibility to which he did not seem obviously called by the hand of Providence.

“Place yourself,” he replied, more than once, “under the guidance of your bishop ; he is the proper person to direct you. At any rate you will have done your duty ; and whatever be the result, you will have no cause for self-reproach.”

“But you will come and see me ?”

“Indeed I will.”

“And you will not refuse to tell me if I am wrong in any thing I undertake ?”

Once more Beattie shook his head and smiled ; but it was a smile of affectionate confidence, that there would be few occasions for such admonitions.

“And now of my more private matters ;” said Villiers, “I must trouble you once more. You will, I am sure, look over again the papers which you drew up for me at Naples ; I must have accurate copies of them taken and placed in the hands of a friend — of more than one friend ; for I tremble at times lest I should lose them, and then all hope would be lost of recovering what at times I still believe God in his great mercy will restore to me. I will bring them to you to-morrow ; and in your hands, for the time, I know they will be safe.”

Beattie readily promised. Even he himself, though neither sanguine nor romantic, and notwithstanding the impenetrable mystery which hung over the loss of Villiers’s child, and had baffled every research, — even Beattie, as he looked proudly and fondly on the noble and almost sacred character of his friend, did not despair that blessings were still in store for him. He wished once more to

examine the documents, and consult upon them a legal friend who had enjoyed considerable experience in the detection of similar cases.

Villiers's arrangements were all made to leave Oxford for Hawkstone the following day. Once more the midnight bell tolled out from the towers and steeples before he could bring himself to separate from Beattie, and before Beattie had half concluded all that he was endeavouring to explain of the proper organisation of the Church, and of the necessity for restoring it at this time to meet its tremendous responsibilities, by the restoration of the collegiate principle, cleared from the errors of monasticism. Once more they roused the sleepy porter at the gate, who, notwithstanding the nightly disturbance of his doze, stood obsequiously with hat in hand to open the wicket for Mr. Beattie's friend.

"I will bring you the papers to-morrow," were Villiers's last words.

To-morrow came. Villiers rose to go to chapel and to breakfast with his friend for the last time. He went to his desk to obtain the papers. Every thing lay as usual—the lock uninjured, money to a considerable amount untouched, some rings, private papers, confidential letters, all safe; nothing was missing: but when he looked for the packet sealed with black, it was gone.

We have no wish to exhibit characters created for respect under the influence of mere feeling. Villiers was not indeed a hero of romance, with whom every emotion is a hurricane of passion. He possessed a wonderful control over himself, and for mere passion entertained a profound contempt. He therefore neither tore his hair nor wrung his hands; but his consternation was great. He searched through all the drawers—ransacked every corner—endeavoured to recall every clue by which he

might remember where the papers were mislaid. He had seen them only two nights before. The notion of robbery was laid aside when he examined the desk and found every thing untouched. His room, moreover, had been kept locked during his absence, and he had the key in his pocket. Unwilling to make a charge so vague, which might unjustly expose the whole household to suspicion, he sent privately for the master of the hotel. But no light could be thrown on the loss. Only one person, when interrogated, seemed to entertain a suspicion. A foreign gentleman, a Jew, who had been staying in the house, happened to meet Villiers's servant at the door of his master's room, while he was removing his things to his new apartment. He had come into the room to ask some frivolous question, and had looked about him : and on inquiry of the chamber-maid, it was found that he had complained to her soon afterwards that his own room was noisy, and had asked to be moved into the one which adjoined Villiers's, and communicated with it by an inner door. It was found also that he had left Oxford that morning by the earliest conveyance, and gone to London. Slight as the clue was, it recalled to Villiers's mind the sound which he had heard in the keyhole the night when he was last examining the papers, — the mention of his own name in the street, — all that he had heard from Beattie, — the strange look, which nevertheless seemed to be not new to him : and writing a hasty note to Beattie, he proceeded without delay to London, in the vain hope of tracing the stranger. It is needless to say that all his efforts were vain : baffled and wearied, he was obliged to resign himself to his loss. And now that all hopes of recovering his child were gone, he consoled himself by planning how he should devote more com-

pletely himself, and all that he possessed, to the service of his Maker. He had no longer any object in either sparing or accumulating. Unselfish in all his thoughts, he never had contemplated his possessions, enlarged as they were by his uncle's death, as a means of personal aggrandisement. But so long as there remained a possibility of discovering his child, so long he felt the obligation of guarding and preserving for him all that he might have a right to claim. That obligation was now all but destroyed: recovery seemed hopeless. And after remaining in London for some weeks to make the necessary arrangements with his lawyers, Villiers, with a heavy and weary heart, came down to Hawkstone on the very night of the fire: and to that place we must now, after this long retrospection, carry back our readers.

CHAP. XXVI.

WE trust that our readers will be able to pass from the grave and sobering thoughts of the preceding chapters to a more insignificant scene, and yet one not unconnected with them, and will now take their stand with us by the side of poor Mrs. Crump's arm-chair, and look out of her bow-window into the High Street of Hawkstone.

Although Mrs. Crump's afternoon had closed angrily and gloomily, her prospects brightened up when the next day arrived ; for about twelve o'clock brought an event in her monotonous life, no less than the arrival of a strange gentleman at the side-door of Messrs. Silkem's residence, and evidently a visiter to Miss Mabel Brook herself. None but persons in Mrs. Crump's position can fairly appreciate the envy with which at that moment she would have regarded persons possessing, like ourselves, the privilege of following this visiter into the house, and of hearing every word that passed. There is in fact a remarkable faculty possessed by authors — that of ubiquity, by which they see every thing, and hear every thing, and can give a most accurate report of all that passes in the most secret and confidential communication : and as these pages may perhaps meet Mrs. Crump's eye, we shall not hesitate on the present occasion to take advantage of our privilege, and give her full information. The gentleman then in question, as Mrs. Crump herself perceived, was rather of that age which is most appropriately described “as the same age with

every body else ;” that is, he was neither young nor old ; but he was portly, of a military aspect, with whiskers, and even an abridgement of mustachoes ; and he was enveloped, though the day was by no means cold, in a blue military cloak, with a profusion of silk cords and tassels depending from his neck, round which there also hung a massive watch-guard and chain, which to Mrs. Crump’s admiring eye were composed of solid gold. He inquired respectfully of Mabel’s little Abigail, if this was the residence of the celebrated Miss Brook ; upon which the little Abigail, frightened out of her wits at the sight of so formidable a stranger, hesitatingly replied, “ No—Miss Brook’s name was not Celebrated, but Mabel.”

“ Miss Mabel Brook ! It is the same personage,” said the stranger. “ Pray present to her my card, and say that I beg the honour of an interview.”

The card was of the most polished character, bearing on it in full blazonry the title of Major O’Keefe, Honorary Secretary to the Royal and National Grand African Colonisation and Timbuctoo Civilisation Society, No. 94. Suffolk Street. Before Mabel had had time to inquire of her little maid the appearance of the stranger, or to recover from the trepidation naturally produced by the approach of such a titled personage, he had himself followed up the stairs, and even made his appearance within the door of Mabel’s sanctuary. With his hat gracefully waving in one hand, and the other pressed respectfully to his breast, he bowed repeatedly ; and then approaching Mabel, he begged to know if he had the honour of addressing that well-known ornament of society, that example of genuine benevolence and enlightened liberality, whose name had reached far beyond the narrow sphere to which her beneficent exertions were un-

happily limited? "Was it Miss Mabel Brook whom he then had the pleasure of beholding?"

To this overpowering exordium it was impossible for Mabel's modesty to do more than colour and look confused, and say, "Oh! oh!" and beg that he would take a chair; which, throwing aside his blue envelopment, and studiously displaying, not only his massive chain, but two equally massive rings upon his fingers, as he passed them negligently through his copious hair, he proceeded to do.

"Madam," he commenced, "I will make no apology for thus intruding on hours dedicated to the sweetest labours of an enlightened charity; but I have been deputed to wait on you by the committee of that noble and illustrious society, to further whose object I have devoted, I might say sacrificed, myself—the Royal and National Grand African Colonisation and Timbuctoo Civilisation Society, No. 94. Suffolk Street. You must be aware, madam, of the deep interest which benevolent individuals have recently taken in the fate of Africa. Wilberforce, Macaulay, Stephens, Smith, Hopkins, Johnson, Thompson—hundreds of the most illustrious characters of the day—feeling the blot which that unhappy country now makes on the face of the globe, have resolved to wipe out this dark stain from the age. They propose to rouse the country, madam; they will sound the tocsin throughout the length and breadth of the land; they will summon together the great, the noble, the learned, the pious,—all that dignifies human nature and society,—Prince Albert, Madam, himself, and the Bishop of —; and from the platform of Exeter Hall there will go forth a voice which will be heard in the inmost depths of the spice-breathing forests of Africa, and by the swarthy natives of the

farthest south, saying to them, 'Be free! be civilised! be happy!' Madam——" But here, as he was obliged to pause in order to take breath, Mabel also took the opportunity to express her deep sympathy with the society, of whose formation she had been made duly acquainted through the public press; and also to hint at the admiration which the stranger's glowing language and energetic delivery had already excited in her mind.

"But, madam," he resumed, "I must not longer deprive myself of the pleasure of offering to you the tribute to your numerous virtues, which the committee of our illustrious society have desired to pay you. They have begged your acceptance, madam, of this diploma, which I here present you, and entreat that you will allow your name to be enrolled among the Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Ladies Affiliated Association, for the furtherance of our benevolent object."

And with these words, from a pocket which apparently contained a number of documents of the same shape and size, the stranger produced a huge sheet of printed paper, blazoned and adorned with a variety of allegorical figures, and containing a long and dignified list of visitors, presidents, patrons, vice-patrons, honorary governors, that is, governors who were not allowed to govern, subscribers, and supporters; resolutions moved by Lord A., and seconded by the Bishop of B.; and at the bottom, in a copious and most tortuous hieroglyphic, the signature of Augustus Philadelphus Wilberforce O'Keefe, honorary Secretary and Treasurer. But that which most surprised, and, it must be confessed, most delighted Mabel, was a letter addressed to herself by the body of the committee, expressing their admiration of her character, their desire to show their sense of the benefit which, in such va-

rious capacities, she had rendered to the cause of true benevolence, and the unanimous applause with which she had therefore been elected to a seat at the board of honorary vice-presidents of the Ladies', &c. &c. &c. The honorary secretary and treasurer was not insensible to the favourable effect produced on the honorary vice-president.

"Madam," he proceeded, "will you now permit me to explain to you, succinctly but precisely, the object of our most important undertaking, in which we fervently trust you will both sympathise and co-operate with us?"

Mabel bowed, and placed herself in a listening posture, not forgetting, however, that too ready an acceptance, even of such an honour, might compromise her own dignity, and therefore throwing into her countenance a cast of critical and judicial severity, to temper the blandness of her general demeanour.

"Our object, madam," said the secretary (and he drew his chair closely and confidentially to her side), "is to pour the light of civilisation and liberty over the vast regions of Africa—a fourth part, madam, of the habitable globe."

Mabel bowed assent.

"We feel, madam, that nothing can reclaim those miserable nations from their present degraded position, or put a stop to the horrors of slavery——"

Mabel gave a shudder.

"Yes, madam, the horrors of slavery! What Englishman, what female—what tender, delicate, affectionate heart—a heart, madam, like your own, does not glow at the name of liberty? How can we release these miserable regions from their state of darkness and thralldom, except by pouring in upon them the light of civilisation? It is our wish, madam, to establish relations with all the tribes in

the interior of Africa. We propose to develop their resources, to modify their institutions, to carry out the principles of an enlightened utility."

Mabel looked all attention.

"To do this, madam, we have obtained from a most eminent French traveller accurate statistics of the population, commerce, manufactures, literature, and religion of those vast regions; and we find, on authentic calculation, that by turning the labour of the people into manufactures and agriculture, more wealth would be created than by selling them as slaves."

Mabel bowed.

"Once, madam, impress this great truth on the mind of the sovereigns of those districts, and by the inevitable operation of the great law of our nature, prudential self-love, the slave-trade will be abandoned, manufactures and commerce will be introduced into the dark regions of Timbuctoo, and will bring with them all the blessings of life which they have diffused upon our own favoured shores."

Mabel here did not bow assent, for the word manufactures reminded her that she had just come from the dying bed of a poor stunted factory child, whose arms had been crushed in the machinery, and whom his mother, with ten starving children, was vainly endeavouring to support upon cold potatoes and water — the father spending his wages in the intervals of work at the public-house.

"Madam," continued the secretary, "nothing but knowledge can work this miraculous change. 'Knowledge,' madam, as the great Bacon says — 'Knowledge is power.' And one of the first debts due by our civilised continent to our unhappy brethren of Africa is to give them knowledge."

"You intend, I suppose, sir," inquired Mabel, "to establish schools among the blacks?"

"Certainly, madam, certainly — schools of all kinds. One of our first thoughts, madam. I may mention to you privately, madam, and confidentially, that a most distinguished person has already placed at the disposal of the society a sum of 1000*l.* to found a professorship of political economy in the great capital of Africa. The Rev. Dr. Mason, that celebrated writer and divine, has also been pleased to place at our disposal all the unsold copies of his lectures on that science (and I assure you they amount to a large number of volumes), for the purpose of circulating them among the negroes."

"How interesting!" said Mabel. "And pray, sir, do the negroes understand English?"

"No, madam, not yet, not exactly: but Dr. Jones, who understands the languages of all the savage tribes both in Africa and in Europe, and has published some beautiful translations from their literature and poetry, has undertaken, for a mere trifle, not above three or four hundred pounds, to render them into the vernacular tongue, the Ashantee dialect — a man, madam, that, of prodigious power! wonderful memory! extraordinary fancy! His opinion is, that the chapter on rent and wages will tell wonderfully in opening the eyes of the natives to the true theory of wealth. He has some notion of publishing a little volume himself, of translations from an Ashantee poem, one of them a splendid epic — wild, madam, and irregular, wanting in the unities, but sweetly touching — spirit-stirring — the peripateia especially!"

"I should like much to see it," said Mabel; "there is something so interesting and affecting in the wild life of the native African."

"Certainly, madam, certainly," said the secretary; "nothing can be more so. It is to be pub-

lished by subscription. Would you allow me to put your name on the list?"

Mabel, however, was prudent and economical even in her enthusiasm, and was obliged to decline; pleading the many calls on her purse.

"We shall hope, madam," continued the secretary, "to print it at Timbuctoo. Our expedition takes out a printing-press, — one of our first objects. We shall have a newspaper, madam, weekly at first, but we do not doubt of its circulation soon reaching to a considerable extent, and then we propose to publish it daily; the *African Sun* it is to be called — allegorical, you see, emblematic of intellectual light. It will contain all the European news — our parliamentary reports, which will give the poor blinded natives an interest in a free government — the rise of stocks — authentic accounts of prices — the state of shipping — quotations of foreign articles in the British markets, — every thing, in fact, which can enlighten the mind as to the true principles of wealth, and enable them to comprehend and labour to attain themselves the blessings of civilisation."

"How delightful!" said Mabel.

"Yes, madam; and a country, that, of prodigious resources! fine inland river, that, the Niger! gold-dust, ivory, elephants, monkeys, lions, alligators, snakes, crocodiles. The Niger itself, madam, contains more crocodiles than any river in Europe."

"Does it, indeed?" asked Mabel. "And are they good to eat?"

"Not exactly, madam, not precisely; though Capt. Biffen — the great traveller, who has spent months in the interior shooting, and has given the world that delightful and interesting account of his sport — bagged twenty elephants, fifteen buffaloes, and ten boa-constrictors in one day, besides a tiger

and baboon — he says, indeed, that the green fat just below the last joint of the off fore-paw is exquisitely delicious, and would rival turtle — beat it, indeed, out of the market; but our thoughts have rather been turned to science. We long to introduce into our own beloved country the same blessings of knowledge which we would diffuse in Africa; and what branch of knowledge more interesting, more valuable, more refreshing and expanding to the mind — carrying it, madam, up to the great Cause of all things, and filling it with wonder and admiration — than the study of Nature, and Nature's works!"

Mabel smiled, and assented.

"And yet, madam, think, even in this favoured land, and among our own enlightened peasantry, and even our artisans, how few know the difference between an alligator and a crocodile!"

"Very few," said Mabel, a little alarmed lest any question on the subject should arise which might betray her own ignorance of this important point.

"Oh! madam, we look forward to the day when not only in the Regent's Park, but in every town in England, there may be a zoological collection — live birds and beasts of all kinds. We have entered already into a contract with the proprietors of the Surrey Gardens to supply them every three months with two live crocodiles. They seldom live longer than three months in this climate — cold, madam, and damp, compared with the genial atmosphere of their own delightful land! They will become a branch of trade — open a new line of profitable speculation. We calculate that the prime cost of one, all expenses and duties paid, will be scarcely more than what any private gentleman of moderate fortune might easily afford, if he wished to keep one himself."

"Indeed!" said Mabel.

“ Then, madam, think of our own trade ; what a market for our own commodities ; how delightful to introduce among the blinded hordes of those benighted regions our own enjoyments—brandy, rum, gunpowder, fire-arms. We have already contracted for 500 stand of muskets with a great manufacturer at Birmingham, warranted, madam, not to burst till the third time of firing. Opium, again ——”

“ Opium !” inquired Mabel, rather alarmed. “ I should not have thought it desirable to encourage a taste for opium among the negroes.”

“ Oh ! madam, not for the world, not for the world ; it is not with a view to encourage any pernicious habit ; not that, madam ; but commerce, you see, must be free, free as air. Fetter its wings, and, like the imprisoned eagle, it pines and dies !”

Mabel was enchanted with the metaphor, but could not help reverting to the objectionable character of an opium trade.

“ You see, madam,” said the secretary, and he drew his chair still closer, and subdued his voice into a persuasive and didactic tone, “ you see, madam, the state and prospects of this country are so alarming in consequence of our commercial speculations, that it becomes absolutely necessary for us to look round on all sides, and to provide means for developing them farther. Capital, madam, must be employed, otherwise how could we pay our National Debt ? Our shipping must be kept up, or what is to become of our duties ? In fact, madam, our whole existence depends on our manufactures and commerce ; and opium, madam, is one great branch ; two millions of money annually are invested in it. What would the Chancellor of the Exchequer say if this branch of his revenue was cut off ? No, madam, it is not for us to interfere with or fetter the natural expansion of trade ; it will take its own

course, and work out its own end, and nothing but mischief can follow from attempts to overrule it. The nineteenth century has long since exploded the old absurd theories of restrictions upon commerce. But then, madam, do not suppose we are insensible to our moral influence. It is by showing to the poor natives our superiority in all points of knowledge, by compelling them to look up to us for the supply of their wants, that we intend to acquire a control over them, and lead them on in the glorious path of civilisation. We take out a steam-engine, madam, which is to work the gold mines: gold mines, we know, there are in abundance; labour cheap and plentiful; and the negroes will work almost for nothing if kept properly in order. Why, in our own factories children work twelve hours a day for 6*d.*; and it will be hard if the negroes in their own country cannot be induced to do the same. Stimulate their wants, madam, enlarge their capacity for enjoyment, open to them new views of advantages, and you will find that even the negroes will become as industrious, and as civilised, and as happy, as our own artisans."

Mabel, however, said nothing, for again the word "factory" had raised up a painful vision before her eyes; and she turned the subject by pointing to an engraving on the diploma, which represented a splendid range of buildings, with a quay, and shipping in the distance; and on the foreground, a lady of most amiable deportment, with a helmet on her head and a spear in her hand, sitting in what to ordinary mortals must be an uncomfortable position, on the tire of a wheel, and stretching out her hands to a group of negroes, not attired with perfect decorum, or rather, not attired at all (for modern art seems to have dispensed with the superfluity of dress). The above-mentioned negroes were also em-

ployed in carrying some huge bales, carefully corded, and marked Messrs. Baldwin and Co., Merchants, Timbuctoo. Above was a splendid irradiation of light pouring down from amidst a mass of dispersing clouds.

"This print, I suppose," said Mabel, "is emblematical?"

"Yes, madam," said the secretary, "partly so—a little device of my own" (and he smiled with conscious dignity); "but partly real. It is the architect's design for the new town of Albert-Ville, on the banks of the Niger."

"Indeed!" said Mabel. "It is very beautiful."

"Exquisite, madam; one of the most charming and complete things which Mr. Plasmer has produced! Great genius that, madam! very great genius! You see, here is the Crescent; Victoria Crescent it is to be called, in honour of her most gracious Majesty. Here, in the centre, is the hotel, a most spacious and convenient house, containing baths, billiard-room, ball-room, theatre adjoining, admirably ventilated kitchens, tap-room, and separate spirit-shop at the back for the accommodation of the natives; a noble range of houses and warehouses on the banks of the river: the whole to communicate with a railway direct from Timbuctoo."

"Indeed!" said Mabel. "It is a magnificent idea!"

"Magnificent, indeed," said the secretary; who seemed as if by this time he had exhausted his eloquence, and wished to draw the conversation to a practical closing point. But Mabel's thoughts had before this turned to one other consideration.

"And I presume, sir," she said, pointing to a central tower, round which the buildings were picturesquely grouped, "I presume this is to be the church?"

"No, madam, not exactly, not precisely; it is

the tower of the observatory. We are to have an observatory. You are aware how anxious the world of science has long been to establish a chain of observatories over the whole earth. They have built one at Botany Bay. The grand celebrated Association for Science, where all the philosophers assembled last year, particularly begged that one of our first things should be to build an observatory, and teach the negroes the use of the telescope. How delightful it will be to see the swarthy Abyssinian villagers, with eyes upturned to heaven, scanning the wonders of the starry world, or calculating the transit of Venus! How elevating to their minds! how enrapturing the prospect! We may owe even the discovery of a new nebula, or the just outline of one of the mountains of the moon, to one of those poor creatures who are now rambling in their native forests, believing, in their miserable ignorance, that the stars are sparks of fire, and the moon only three feet round. Sad, indeed, to reflect, that never till now have we endeavoured to give them juster and more ennobling views! And how delightful the thought, that at length the clouds of darkness may be unrolled from their eyes!"

"And where is your church to be?" pursued Mabel.

"Oh! why—why—oh!" and the secretary hemmed and coughed. "Why, madam, you see"—and he coughed again—"we have been desirous to rally under one grand banner of enlightened benevolence all the great and good minds of the present day; and to do this without risking those sad discordances and disputes on antiquated dogmas which must intervene, whenever, in these days, the subject of religion is mixed up with more practical pursuits. We have therefore thought it better (and the government quite approve of our principle) to leave religion an

open question. But there will be a church, madam. Do not be alarmed ; there is to be a church."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mabel. "And I suppose you will have clergymen and missionaries?"

"Oh ! certainly, madam, certainly. We have thrown open the whole field to competition. Any clergymen of any denomination will be invited to accompany the expedition. And we rather think of allowing to a certain number a free passage, provided they bring proper recommendations from their respective congregations. Something, indeed, was suggested by the government about providing them all land in the colony according to the number of their flocks : but we really dread mixing up the clergy with any secular or temporal pursuits ; it removes them from their purely spiritual duties and character ; and therefore the committee have resolved not to hold out such temptations. Besides which, it would be inconvenient, as the land is of some value, and may be wanted for commercial purposes."

"And have you had many applications or offers from clergymen?" asked Mabel.

"Oh dear, yes ! certainly ; three Baptists, two Presbyterians, four Wesleyans, and six Rational Religionists have sent in their testimonials ; besides one Unitarian clergyman, who intends to open a business in the ivory and spirit line."

"Indeed !" said Mabel. "But is not the ivory and spirit line rather a temporal and secular occupation for a clergyman?"

"Why, rather so, madam, rather, perhaps ; but then, you see, the gentleman must live in some way. He cannot preach and starve. If he is not paid for his services, he must support himself."

"Very true," said Mabel. "But where is the church to be built—our own church, I mean?"

"Why, madam, this has been rather a difficult

question for the committee. They have not liked to pledge themselves exactly to any one religious denomination, as I before said. They feel that it would be presumptuous in them to decide on those deep theological discussions which are now agitating the religious world. They will have no objection to any clergyman of the establishment building his own church, but they feel it would be a departure from their fundamental principle to allow it to appear prominently in the plans of their own architect."

Mabel looked rather puzzled.

"Sir James Perceval," continued the major, "did indeed propose at the board, that a church should be built at the expense of the Association, but it would not do. Such a clamour was raised, and all the various denominations came at the next meeting and protested; and there was a violent altercation, as there must be when you bring together into one place or under one roof a number of persons who differ on a subject on which they all feel warmly. Sir James was obliged to withdraw his motion. But he is a Conservative, madam, as you know, and does not like the idea of not doing something for the Church; and as his party is tolerably strong, they have proposed, by way of preserving peace, what will certainly be carried. One of the largest store-rooms in the settlement is to be set apart every Sunday, and different hours appointed by the governor for the several services of the various denominations; so that they will all meet amicably under the same roof, and no undue preference be given. And thus the natives will have the opportunity of hearing the truth set before them in all its various forms, without any attempt on our part to prejudice their minds; the Association undertaking the cleaning out of the room."

Mable looked disappointed. But before she could say more, there was a double knock at the door below, and the secretary, seemingly most ready to seize the excuse, rose to depart. Once more he waved his hat most gracefully, apologised for the long time during which he had trespassed on Mabel's attention, and trusted that his explanations had been satisfactory—hoped that she would as soon as possible co-operate with the central committee, by forming an Affiliated Ladies' Association in Hawkstone, and collecting an annual fund—and begged to know whether she would wish her own subscription to be annual, or, as most of the other honorary vice-presidents had preferred, would make her contribution immediately in a donation of five pounds, which he could receive at once, and which would exempt her from any further trouble. Happily for Mabel, she had presence of mind to request time for consideration, and the more so, as, in her own heart, Africa, with all its interesting features, was balanced by a recent proposal which had been made to her that very morning through the Rev. Mr. Armstrong and the Rev. Mr. Howell, the Baptist and Independent ministers of Hawkstone, to aid them in an important work nearer home—no less than the sending out a deputation from the clergy of the Protestant communions of England to convert the Pope. The eyes of Protestantism, and particularly of Protestantism in Hawkstone, by the rapid rise of a new Popish chapel among them, had been opened more than ever to the enormities of popery, and to the fearful strides which it was making in England. And it was thought that a grand effort should be made to stay the evil at the fountain head, by endeavouring to act at once on the conscience and understanding of the Papal court; for which pur-

pose a deputation of the most eloquent dissenting ministers had offered their services to go to Rome, provided their travelling expenses were paid, and their families maintained by their congregations during their absence. And it was thought that the presence of so many distinguished lights of the dissenting interest, differing in all other points of religion, yet all agreeing in their abhorrence of popery, might have a salutary and awakening effect on the mind of the Pope himself. At any rate, as Mr. Howell said, it would be a satisfaction to deliver their consciences, and to preach the Gospel once to the people in the very bosom of Antichrist.

All these thoughts and reminiscences passed rapidly through Mable's mind—a mind capacious enough to grasp both projects at once, and active enough to organise committees, and collect subscriptions, for both, if her finances had permitted her. Gratitude indeed—gratitude for the honour which she had received so unexpectedly and so wholly without solicitation—began to preponderate, when the door opened, and her little Grey School girl, once more half frightened out of her wits, announced, as she held it ajar, that there were two more gentlemen down stairs, who wanted to see Miss Brook: one was Mr. Bevan, and the other, she did not know who. Mabel hastily arranged some papers of school accounts which she was looking over, and omitting to put out of sight the blazoned diploma, which lay open in all its grandeur on the table, she prepared, with a dignified look of business, to receive her new visitors. Only, it must be confessed, she wished the stranger, whoever he was, had come without Mr. Bevan; for Mr. Bevan, she thought, was always laughing at her, and would always intrude his own strange Oxford notions; and, to say

the truth, she was a little afraid of him. She had, however, no time to ruminate, for steps were heard coming up the stairs, and presently Charles Bevan entered the room, and with an apology for the intrusion, he begged permission to introduce to her a gentleman, a friend of his, who was staying in Hawkstone — Mr. Ernest Villiers.

CHAP. XXVII.

It is not from any wish to tantalise the reader needlessly that we must revert, at this point, to another personage, in whose fate, it is hoped, they have not lost their interest during so many intervening chapters. Ernest's visit to Miss Brook was connected with the disappearance of Bentley. He had been directed to Bentley's by Mr. Atkinson, in order to procure some information on a subject of great interest to him. Bentley was not at home, and his housekeeper was beginning to feel uneasy, especially as he had been seen walking back late in the evening to the Priory ruins. In default of Bentley, Ernest resolved to apply to Charles Bevan, whom he had slightly known at college; and Bevan brought him, for information, to Miss Brook.

But while all this was passing, what had become of Bentley himself? We left him at the moment when he sank senseless under the knife of the ruffian. As his consciousness gradually returned to him, he awoke to the sense of a rough jolting motion, apparently through some unfrequented road, for the boughs of trees crashed as they moved along. There was a sound of hoarse brawling water close to him, like a torrent; and as he faintly opened his eyes, he saw above him the moon streaming brightly through a dense mass of foliage. As he became alive to a sense of his situation, he tried to rise from the bottom of the cart in which he was lying, and look round to discover into whose hands he had fallen, and where they were carrying him. But on applying his hand to his chest, he found his clothes saturated with wet blood. Some rough hand had

indeed attempted to bandage up the wound ; but, faint with the loss of blood, he sank back, and had scarcely strength to relieve the uneasy position in which he lay, with nothing but an old sack to break the jolting of the cart over the ruts, and a quantity of hard poles for his support, which by the glittering of the moon on their points he perceived to be pikes. One heavy tramp he could hear close at his side, as of a man attending to the horse. And as he once more endeavoured to rise up, and thought of appealing to him for assistance, a rough voice close at his ear muttered to him “ to lie still, and keep his eyes shut.” The voice was hoarse and hollow, but there was something of kindness in it, which gave Bentley a feeling of hope. It was also Irish, with a strong brogue ; and Bentley fancied it was familiar to him. Presently the cart stopped, and two other voices, as of persons who had just overtaken it, were heard speaking together in an under tone, as if afraid of being overheard. Half fainting and half bewildered, Bentley was unable to collect his thoughts, to know what course he should take. But as he opened his eyes once more, the light fell upon a rough face, begrimed with black, looking steadfastly upon him.

“ He is alive ! ” the fellow cried, with an oath, “ as sure as my name’s Jack.”

“ Is he ? ” said another voice. “ And what in the world are we to do with him ? ”

“ Why did not Wheeler put him down the well at once ? ” said the first ; “ he would have laid snug enough there for ever, and no one the wiser. Who is it, Connell ? ”

“ It’s the parson,” returned the same voice which had before told Bentley to lie still, and which he now recognised, as having heard it often when visiting poor Margaret and the boy after the fire. “ It’s the parson ! ”

"These parsons," rejoined the first speaker, "are always getting into scrapes, meddling with other people's business. Why can't they let folks alone, to do as they like? What is it to them what we choose to do? But them that meddles burns their fingers."

"Hark!" muttered the other, "there's some one coming."

"It's only the water," was the reply.

"And if we do meet any one, what a mess we are in," said the first, "with a murdered man in the cart, and all these confounded pikes too. I say, Jack, let's throw him over at once."

And Bentley could perceive, by the steep ascent of the road, and the brawling of the torrent at some distance below, that they were probably passing along a steep precipitous bank overhanging the river. His head began to swim, and he was on the point of making another effort to rise and cry for help, when Connel's low mutter was heard again, close at his ear, "Lie still, lie still; they shan't touch you!"

"And you're the fool that begged him off, Connell," said the first speaker, "to get hung yourself for your pains!"

"It's I that did it," answered Connell; "and I'd do it a hundred times. Didn't he give me to eat when I was starving, and my wife too? Didn't he offer sums of money to any one who would save my poor boy out of the fire? Didn't he come and visit us afterwards often and often, and always a kind word in his mouth, and something to help us in his hand? I've done bad enough jobs in my day to them as was my enemies, but I do not desert them that's kind to me: and I do not intend to desert Parson Bentley; and, what's more, none of you shall touch a hair of his head."

"Why, he isn't one of your own craft, after all," said the first speaker, with a sneering laugh. "He's one of your heretics, isn't he?"

"May be," said Connell, "and more the pity; but he has been kind to me and mine, for all that."

"Better get rid of him at once," said the second voice. "Dead men tell no tales!"

Connell said nothing, but laid a whip vigorously across the horse, which made him move on rapidly.

"Why, you ar'n't the man, surely," said the same voice, "to mind putting a dangerous fellow out of the way. You've done such a thing before now."

Connell groaned, and laid on another lash of his whip.

"Why," pursued the voice, "they tell me, in Ireland, you folks no more mind popping at gentlefolks from behind a hedge, or knocking at a man's brains with a flint stone in a stocking, to find if they are at home or not, than we mind shooting at a cock sparrow. Eh?"

Bentley heard another deep groan.

"Why, you know," continued the speaker, "if your priest there, or whoever you call him, were to bid you knock out the parson's brains, here, this moment, you'd do it at once."

"Ay, but he wouldn't," muttered Connell.

"Ay, but if he did, would you do it?"

"But he wouldn't," said Connell.

"But if he did?" pursued the speaker.

"He wouldn't," repeated Connell, doggedly; and no other answer could be extracted from him.

"And what in the world do you intend to do with the parson?" said the first speaker.

Connell made no reply.

"I tell you what, Jack," said the other. "There's no use our meddling with this job any more; let's stick to the other cart, and go round by Birking

Lane, down the copse. If Paddy will put his head into the noose, let him."

"And what shall we say to Wheeler?" said the other.

"Let Wheeler shift for himself," was the reply. "He's a rogue and a rascal; 3s. 6*d.*, and a quart of beer for this work: and he gets all the penny subscriptions from the club and pockets them, and no one knows any thing about them. He does not care a fig for any one of us but himself, with all his fine talk about liberty and rights.—Hark! again, here's some one on horseback, sure enough." And the two men fell back and joined the other cart, which was coming slowly up the hill behind, at no great distance.

Bentley, on hearing the approach of a horse, was inclined once more to call out and obtain assistance; but again Connell's rough hollow voice bade him lie still and say nothing, "all was right;" and he thought it better to comply.

"Good night, sir, good night." "Why, rather late, isn't it?" was all that passed between Connell and the stranger on horseback. He turned back, however, for a minute, repeated some kind of password in a foreign language, and asked if the other cart was coming. Connell said, 'Yes,' and the stranger once more bade him good night, in a tone implying a superior education and habits of society, and rode off. Bentley was now left alone with Connell; and he was hoping to obtain from him some information as to his destination; but Connell, without speaking, jumped up on the cart, and seizing the reins, urged on the horse over the rough road, till Bentley, in an agony of pain, was obliged to raise himself up and entreat him to stop.

"Better not, better not," said Connell.

But on Bentley's entreating him to go quietly, for he was very ill, he jumped down, and getting

into the cart, endeavoured to arrange the pikes in such a manner as to make a less uneasy bed. As he did this, there was a strange gentleness and softness about his voice and manner which surprised Bentley, little used to the contrasts of the Irish character. He lifted him up almost like a child, fastened the bandage more tightly about the wound, and taking off his own coat, folded it up, and put it as a pillow under the head of the sufferer, and then covered him with a sack.

“Don’t be afraid, sir, don’t be afraid; I’m your friend; I don’t forget you; I’ll stand by you; only we must get on.” And once more he jumped on the front of the cart, and urged on the horse to a trot. Bentley closed his eyes, and endeavoured to compose his thoughts into prayer; but his head swam, his senses became confused with pain and weakness, and he lay gazing up in the sky with a bewildered sensation of something frightful in which he was involved, without any distinct perception of what passed, except that a large ball of light lay close to his eyes, and a number of sparks were dancing about before them, and burning him. Once or twice he groaned; and Connell, checking the horse, turned to ask what was the matter, and tried to arrange the pillow more comfortably for him. How long he lay in this state he could not tell; but the road from the deep copse-wood, which clothed the steep banks of the torrent, now emerged suddenly upon a wide heath, without a tree of any kind. Huge sweeping hills, destitute of all cultivation, spread far before them; but apparently they were approaching human habitations, for the road became tolerably smooth, and several groups of men passed by, and exchanged with Connell the same good night, and the same mysterious foreign password, which the gentleman on horseback had used

before. Bentley's eyes, however, were now closed in a sort of stupor, from which he was roused by the cart stopping, and by his feeling Connell's arms placed gently under him to lift him up.

"Now, sir, get up—I'll take you out. Don't be afraid—only for your life do all you are told, and don't fear, otherwise your life is not worth a straw.—I'll be with you."

And Bentley, on looking up, found that the cart had stopped in a little yard surrounded by low sheds and buildings, apparently workshops; for large bars of iron were lying about, and heaps of coal, and tools used in mining and excavating. The gate by which they had entered had been carefully closed and barred by Connell; and once more begging Bentley not to be frightened, he raised him up softly, and, lifting him out of the cart, half led and half carried him into a little outhouse, where he arranged some straw, and, laying him down, covered him once more with some sacks. Bentley was by this time in a burning thirst, and he entreated some water, on which Connell disappeared, but returned soon with a cupful of liquid, which he declared would do him good, but which, on tasting, Bentley found to be whisky; and he was obliged, once more, to ask for water. Connell tossed off the whisky himself, and soon brought him a broken jug, out of which Bentley drank with avidity.

"Now, sir, lie still here, and I'll be back presently."

Recovered by the water, Bentley felt his senses becoming clearer, and he could look round and observe by the moonlight the objects around him; and what was still more comforting, he could compose his thoughts to prayer, and prepare himself for the worst which might await him. Where he was, he knew not; but there was a lurid glare in the sky

above him, and a rushing grinding sound as of wheels and machinery not far off, which led him to suppose that he might have been taken up into Hawkstone Forest, among the coal and iron pits ; and it was a thought by no means calculated to allay his alarm. He knew that for several months there had been rumours of insurrectionary movements among the workmen employed in this district ; that it was the refuge of the worst outcasts of society gathered together within the last three or four years by the opening of the mines, and left without any superintendence or control ; that it was the boast of Hawkstone Forest that no policemen dared come near them ; and that as the enormous profits of Sir Matthew Blake, the proprietor, increased, he was employing every day a larger body of labourers, and accumulating a mass of vice and sedition, which threatened soon to break over and deluge the country with some serious mischief.

He lay for more than an hour ruminating on these thoughts, and resigning himself into the hands of Providence. He would have risen to look round him more carefully, and to discover any means of escape, but his wound had become exquisitely painful, and escape in his present state was hopeless. Just as a clock, apparently in a workman's cabin near, struck two, a light as from a lantern appeared in one corner of the shed where he was lying, and from a door in the partition five or six men issued out, and came up to the place where he was lying.

"And so this is he?" said one.

"Yes," said a voice, which Bentley recognised as Connell's ; and at the same time Connell came up to him, and taking hold of his hand, pressed it hard, as if to remind him of his former injunctions, and to reassure him.

"Why, 'tis a bad wound," said another, stooping down, and examining the bandages, which were

full of blood. "That Wheeler's a dangerous chap; he'd as soon stick a man as look at him."

"Well, parson," said a third, who seemed to be the head, "we've heard you're a kindish man, and never grudge your help to the poor, and that's more than some of your cloth can say; and, may be, though we are resolved to have our rights, we've no wish to injure them that do not grind and starve the people. Now, I tell you what, you've been fool enough to go spying and prying into other people's secrets, and have got a knife into you for your pains: do you think that will be a lesson to you never to talk of such secrets again?"

Bentley tried to speak, and to remove the notion that he had any wish either to discover or divulge their secrets; but the man put his hand upon his mouth, and bade him be quiet.

"There's one here," he said, "you must thank if you hav'n't your mouth stopped more effectually; but he's told us all about you. Are you willing to take the oath?"

Bentley asked "What oath?"

"Why, our oath—never to tell to any living soul, be he magistrate, or police, or what not, or friend or foe, any thing you have heard or seen of us."

Bentley replied that he was at their mercy—that he had done them no harm, and never intended to do them harm—that it was by mere accident he was at the Priory—and he was willing to do any thing, not unworthy of a clergyman, to save his life.

There was a laugh and jest from several of the party as he came to the words "unworthy of a clergyman," but their leader silenced them.

"You'll take the oath, then?"

"I will," said Bentley, "if it is not an oath to do any thing wrong."

“ You promise, then ? ”

Bentley faintly answered “ Yes.” Something in his conscience whispered that to take an oath of such a nature, even under such circumstances, was an act of doubtful propriety, to say the least ; but he had not been brought up in a very strict school of casuistry ; his virtues and his religion had both been matters more of feeling than of deep reasoning. And bewildered, and alarmed, and worn out with pain, he consented to do all that was required.

“ Take him up, then,” said the leader. And while two men raised him in their arms, he found Connell gently lifting up his head, and once more whispering in his ear — “ not to be frightened, and do all that he was bid.” It was with some difficulty that they bore him through the narrow door in the partition, and which was concealed by a projection of the wall, and difficult to discover. But the passage widened afterwards, and led down by a flight of wooden steps, rotten and broken, which seemed ready to fall under their weight.

“ Take him softly, mind his head, put your hand under his shoulder,” cried Connell, as they lifted him down the last step ; and the leader, from a huge ring of rusty keys, proceeded to open the padlock of a low door in the wall.

“ Now then, is all ready ? ” he asked.

And once more turning to Bentley, he reminded him of his promise to take the oath, and that his life depended on it. “ If you don’t,” said he, “ why it’s only left for us to take care of ourselves ; and you may judge,” he said, “ whether we can’t easily give you a quietus, which won’t require any oath or any swearing whatever. And if you break the oath —— ”

“ He won’t,” said Connell, “ he won’t break it —

I'll pledge my life for him — I know he's a man of his word — my life for his we're safe with him."

"He'd better not," said the leader. "There was but one man ever broke that oath, and he was a Scotchman, and turned informer; and I'll tell the parson what became of him."

And he stooped down, and whispered in Bentley's ear a few words, which made his blood run cold with horror. "And now is all ready?"

"Do not be afraid, do not be afraid," muttered Connell in Bentley's ear, as he raised him to stand on his feet. "There's no danger, only take the oath."

But Bentley was afraid — and well he might be. He stood on the verge of a dark pit or well, down which hung an iron chain; above, by the light of one or two tallow candles, he saw nothing but the roof of a sort of cave hewn out of the solid rock, and dripping with water. The men had nearly stripped themselves naked, and were turning a windlass, by which Bentley saw a low shallow wooden tub rising to the top of the well. It no sooner reached the surface than the captain of the gang bade them put over Bentley a rough blackened smock-frock; and himself getting into the tub, Bentley was placed in it likewise, and, supported in the arms of the other, he felt the chain rapidly lower; the glimmering light of the candles became fainter, the aperture of the well began to contract; and as the light above fell with a dimmer lustre on the rough damp rockwork, out of which the shaft was excavated, the dense pitchy mass of darkness in which they were sitting themselves seemed to rise rapidly above them.

"I have money," said Bentley to his companion; "what will you take to set me free?" as he vainly thought of propitiating him.

"Money have you?" said the man; "then you'd better give it to me."

"Here," said Bentley, as he put a quantity of silver into his hand. The man looked on it scornfully, and put it into his pocket.

"Where are we going?" asked Bentley.

"You'll soon see," said his companion. "There, mind your head."

And as the bucket swung against the side of the shaft, he with some difficulty saved Bentley from the concussion.

"Catch hold of the chain. Have you strength to hold on yourself?"

"No," said Bentley, faintly, for he was becoming giddy.

"There now—here we are," said the man; and the bucket touched the ground with a shock which nearly threw him out. In a minute Bentley found himself seized by two men, naked to the waist, and begrimed with filth; a third bore two rough-shaped torches, and with the captain of the gang following, Bentley was carried along a steep, plashy, descending passage, hewn out of the rock. The air was stifling. The glare of the torches fell fearfully on the low ponderous roof, which seemed ready to crush them as they advanced, and before them was a black depth of darkness, into which it was impossible for the eye to penetrate.

"Stop," said the captain, when they had advanced as much as a hundred yards in this way. "You must wait here. Put him down."

And resting Bentley with his back against the rock, they disappeared. Left alone in utter darkness, in the bowels of the earth, and in the hands evidently of designing and desperate men, he felt his whole soul sink with alarm. He continued, however, to pray fervently; and with every prayer his strength increased, and his presence of mind returned. As a light appeared in the direction in which they had come, he almost began to hope that

it was the same party returning ; but it was only Connell. Once more he brought Bentley a cup of whisky, and entreated him to drink it ; and rather than disappoint him, Bentley placed it to his lips, but could not swallow it.

“ You’ll take the oath,” said Connell ; “ mind you take the oath. There’s nothing in it ; only not to tell, that’s all. If you don’t, you’re a dead man. I promised you should take it ; or do you suppose Wheeler would have let you off ? Why, they had you at the side of the well in the ruins, and were just about to heave you in when I came back ; and I had a regular tussle with them. But I do not forget, sir, what you’ve done for me, — and I with no friend in the world, and a miserable wretch that might as well be put an end to myself. You’ll pray for me when I’m gone, sir ? you’ll pray for my soul, won’t you ? ”

And as the light fell on Connell’s haggard countenance there was an expression in it of terror and suffering, which made Bentley, even in his own alarming position, almost forget himself in compassion for his poor companion. He had no time, however, to say any thing, for the captain and the others returned, once more lifted him in their arms, and carried him along by a continuation of the same low winding excavation in the rock. On turning a sharp projecting point, Bentley perceived a wider opening ; the roof was higher, and supported by two masses of rock, which had been left to form natural pillars ; another flat mass in the middle served as a sort of table, and against the side were fastened three torches, the red glare from which fell on those men who stood round it, the lower part of their faces covered with black crape, and one of whom seemed to start when he saw Bentley. On the table was a Bible, a skull, a glass containing a red liquor, a drawn sword, a brace of pistols, a

dagger, and two pikes such as those which Bentley had seen in the cart. It was not indeed at first that he perceived all this, for the sight so sickened him that he would have sunk back and fainted, had not Connell, who was at his side, once more put the spirits to his mouth and forced him to swallow some.

"We'd better make haste," said the man who had seemed to recognise Bentley; "there's no time for speechifying; and he must get his wound drest. Make him kneel down."

And placing him on his knees, and supporting him, they put the Bible into his hand, and proceeded to administer the oath. It was a strange, awful rhapsody—strange, in that it mixed up religion and rebellion, bloodshed and justice, appeals to the Divine Being, with pledges of crime to man,—but binding the swearer, never on earth, or sea, in winter or summer, in trouble or wealth, to friend or foe, living or dying, to reveal the secrets, or do harm or hurt to any member of the society by whom that oath was administered to him. Bentley shuddered with terror as he heard the curses imprecated on him who should violate it: and when at the close he heard the most holy names appealed to to give sanction to it, (for even a society of rebels and murderers find they cannot govern without the aid of some appeal to another world, cannot rule without professing their belief in a religion,) he was about to make a solemn protest and remonstrance against such an awful mockery, but Connell pressed his hand, and fear once more predominated over the voice of his conscience. He could not say "Amen" as it was uttered in a deep voice by all the persons present, but he kissed the Bible as it was placed to his lips, and was about to rise, with a deep sense of degradation and remorse, when he was forced down once more on his knees, and each

person taking up one of the weapons off the rock which served for the table, and holding them close at his breast, he was ordered to repeat after them, "May these pikes pierce my heart, and this blood be on my head, if I break this oath which I have taken!" At the close they put the glass to his mouth, but Bentley shuddered with horror as the smell betrayed its loathsome contents, and with unutterable disgust he threw it from him, and the glass fell to the ground.

"He refuses it!" said the leader. "Away with him!"

"He tasted it, he did taste it," cried Connell; "look upon his lips:" and with dexterity he contrived to smear upon them some of the blood which had fallen on his own hand. "He's a safe man! I know he's safe! Take my life for his. I know he's safe!" And with all the eloquence of an Irishman the poor fellow began again enumerating all Bentley's kindnesses and charities, and urging his claims to mercy. "But he's gone," he cried, "he's clean gone;" as he turned and found that Bentley had fainted away.

"Carry him off," said the leader; "we'll hold you responsible for him."

"Yes," said Connell; and with the help of one of his companions he bore him away.

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